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EDITH MAY.

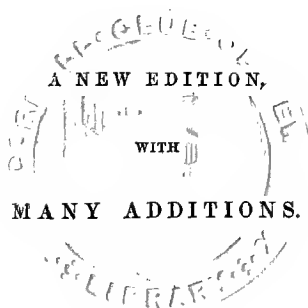


Emily May


P O E M S

BY

EDITH MAY.



PHILADELPHIA:
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Preface.

MUCH and often as the threshold of fame is profaned by wilful or mistaken intruders, there is something inexpressibly sacred and touching in the first timid footsteps toward its shining altar, taken by the young and pure aspirant who is obeying a beckoning hand which the world cannot yet see. The feeling of deference and honour with which one recognises the mien and utterance of true genius, is mingled irresistibly with the thought of its counterbalancing ills—the thirsts for which common life has no water, and the keener sensibilities, for which human allotment has neither protection nor allowance. At the same threshold, too, stand the crowds of rejected and dis-

(5)

appointed, who vindictively dispute the claim and discourage the hesitating footsteps of the new comer; and, for these ills—tracking genius as they do to the grave—neither the viewless lips which give words to what no other mortal could have uttered, nor the “second sight” which reveals what no other mortal could have seen, nor the consciousness of a higher nature when alone, nor the whispers of spirits and angels which are never found not to have been human thoughts till envy and malice have poisoned all else, seem to be a sufficient compensation. One looks upon youthful genius, thus double-laden with gifts and ills, as one sees the victim prepared with bright flowers for the knife.

It is not one of the least of the conventional disregards of genius, that the recognition and welcome at the threshold of fame’s temple are chance-given, if at all; and that, in place of a responsible and respectful warden at this gate, where enters what the world should most honour, there is likelier to be found only the base crowd of hinderers and detractors, by whom the timid knock of the young pilgrim is treated as a crime. It is by his chance vicinity to the place where should stand a higher and better autho-

rized discharger of the office, that the editor of a public journal may sometimes be the first to see that a fine spirit stands waiting without, and for lack of better usher, he may advance to claim entrance for the stranger. The introducer of the present work to the public is in that position. If it seem that his task might be done with better grace by one having more authority, his apology has been made in what he has just written.

Of the poems in this volume, and of the powers of the fair poetess, the writer has expressed his opinions very fully in the journal of which he is editor, and to which some of them were originally contributed. Beautiful as these early productions are, however, he looks upon them mainly as promises. They have been written upon the leaf of life first turned over after girlhood—in the lap of luxury and seclusion, with no inspiration save what comes from the instincts of the heart and conversance with the romantic scenery around her home. They are literally the fore-reachings of genius which anticipate the teachings of experience.

How Edith May would sing of the *realities* of life, hav-

ing thus hymned her chant from the far *shadows* it throws upon her imagination, those who have watched the tuning of inspiration by sorrow and struggle will easily conceive. The single poem of “*Te Deum Laudamus*,” which will be found on a succeeding page, shows the port and mien of one whose walk in the highest fields of poetry would be that of inborn stateliness and fitness. The rhythm has an instinctive power and dignity, showing the key to which the mind is habitually toned, and the conception and management of the subject are full of originality and beauty. Those who read this and the other poems will have had a star named to them, for whose future place and shining they will look ; and, in this first announcing of a light that is to be recognised and brighten hereafter, is to be found the main errand which the introducer would claim for the present volume.

N. P. WILLIS.

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TO
MY MOTHER,
This Volume
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

P O E M S.

MADDALENA'S CONFESSION.

THE Bride of Christ! oh, at those words there swept
Bright glories through my spirit! I was deaf
To the deep anthem. Prelate and stoled priest,
The dim cathedral walls, the kneeling crowd,
The lattice where the black-robed nuns looked through
All passed away from mine enraptured eyes.
I saw no more thy bowed form, oh, my mother!
Nor his who stood far down the aisle of columns
Hiding his bent brow with his mantle's fold.

It seems not long since I, a little child,
Trode yon cathedral floors, and in deep awe,
First crossed my forehead with the holy water.

It seems not long, Jacopo, since we twain
Prayed, kneeling at one shrine, together sent
Our mated voices like paired larks to heaven,
Or, hand in hand, walked where the garden fountains
Cleft the grim lion mouths.

Have patience, father!

For I am worn with fasting and much prayer,
And tears flow readily. How many days
Have I lain prostrate at the altar's foot,
The marble striking death into my heart,
Speaking no word, partaking of no food
Save water and the crust that gave me strength
To move my lips in prayer! How oft till morn,
My forehead pressed against His icy feet
Who hangs upon the cross, have I lain here
With but one grim companion. Even thou,
Symbol of death, gaunt prophet of the tomb,
That in thy cavernous eyes dost hold the night,
Glaring beside my rosary and missal!

Thou knowest well my father was a noble.
That he lived gayly, making his great wealth

The slave of pleasure. I remember still
Revels where wine flowed free, and festal times
That filled our lone, vast palace by the sea
With guests and music. Then, at early twilight,
There ever came a young, bright girl who took
Me, the weak child, within her gentle hold,
Smiling so softly while my faint hands passed
Over the roses in her hair, the pearls .
Clasped on her throat and round, pure, dewy arms.
Ginevra! oh, I loved to speak her name!
I loved my nurse to bear me to the window
Where, lying on her shoulder, I could mark
My sister's white robes floating through the trees,
My sister as she spake, or walked, or rode,
Great nobles at her side, who smiled and bent
Their plumed heads to catch her lightest word.

But this was for a season; many months
The palace was deserted. Then, alone,
We wandered freely through the vacant rooms,
I, and my nurse Giuseppa. She would pause
Sometimes by pictures of worn saints and martyrs,

St. Lawrence in the flames, his lifted face
Full of sublime forgetfulness of pain,
Or Stephen stoned and prone; perchance to mark
Pale hermits watching in their forest caves
With lamp and book, the inner darkness shapen
Into black fiends; or sometimes, oh, my soul!
An Ecce Homo with dim eyes upraised,
And red drops trickling from the crown of thorns!
All these Giuseppa scanned with reverent face;
I, in her arms held level with the canvas,
Looked on in childish fear.

There came a message

That said Ginevra, weary of the court,
Returned to us alone.

'Twas early noon.

I, over-wearied, dreamed upon my couch;
And when I woke my sister stood beside me.
Ginevra? no!—ah heaven! was *that* Ginevra
Who quivered at my fear, and in the sunlight
Stood shivering ere she bent and faintly pressed
Her lips upon my brow!

I never knew

What sorrow like a tearful angel rent
The veil between my sister's heart and God.
Her brow was as the forehead of a saint,
Bearing the marks of thorns, and on her face
None looked except to breathe a sigh that tracked
Some upwinged thought to Heaven. Oh, to my sense,
Her beauty was unreal; whether she prayed
Kneeling beneath the altar lights, a glory
Tremulous in her hair, whether we twain
Paced the long galleries where ranged silver sconces,
Studding the walls, cast down before our feet
Black shades like chasms, whether to her voice
I listened while the stealthy-footed night
Passed by unchallenged! As a captive stands
Vacantly gazing at the world without
Through his barred prison windows, all his heart
Busy with other scenes, so looked the soul
Through her blue holy eyes. I loved her well!
I stopped my play to look if she passed by,
Or if she mused beside the gallery windows
As was her wont, I, stealing to her side,
Stood tiptoe that my arms might clasp her waist,

And sometimes cloistered in her chamber, there
We read and talked till purple twilight stains
Sank through the marble pavement. In that room
There hung a copy of a rare old picture,
The marriage of St. Catherine.

I remember

That she grew farther from me, day by day,
I guessed not wherefore. Over her blue eyes
The lids drooped heavily, as lilies loll
Against the swell of waves. No echo tracked
Her footstep through the vaulty corridors,
And often in the night I saw her rise
To gaze upon St. Catherine's blessed face,
Or prone before the crucifix, lie there
Praying till dawn.

Once more Ginevra stood

Flower-crowned and jewelled, but beneath the light
Of tall cathedral tapers. From the crowd
Quick sobs burst audibly; the very priests
Looked with sad eyes; nuns to the lattice pressed
And blenched away, but she unconscious stood
With folded hands, and looks upcast as though

The vacant space were legible to her gazing.
Then my fair haughty mother cowered for fear,
My father's gay lips whitened.

There are some
Still in these cloisters who remember well
An angel on whose lip meek mortal prayer
Had changed to saintly praise. For week on week,
The searching lamp of the confessional
Shining athwart the fair page of her soul
Showed blot nor blur. They say her Heaven-linked
voice

Chanting, the Gloria outsped the choir
So far, the calm-browed nuns, uplifting eyes
Dim with the haze of revery, made her notes
A golden ladder where their souls went up
Into God's presence; and 'twas whispered low,
That when, all through the midnight, from the toll
Of the last Angelus to the hour of prime,
She knelt before the Sacrament, a sound
Of voices pierced the silence. Then, perchance,
The wakeful guardian stationed at her side
Revealed himself.

Joyful, and sorrowful,
And glorious mysteries meekly she had told
Upon her rosary of years, when death
Garnered her sweet soul. Mass nor prayer was said;
For those there be who swear a hovering crown
Rained on her brow faint glory, and around
Crept music and rich odours, while awed priest
And kneeling abbess with rapt upraised looks
Sang the *Te Deum Laudamus*!

So she passed!

I bear upon my breast the cross that wore
Its outline upon hers.

Thou, camest, Jacopo,
Playmate and friend!

Do you remember now
How, while you twined the vine leaves in my hair,
I told you saintly legends? When we saw
Fair pictures in the clouds, you made them limn
Chariots and battling horsemen, but to me
Came trooping angels.

Still my sister's chamber
Seemed hallowed by her presence. Crumbling wreaths

Dropped from the crucifix. Her favourite books,
Their pages blistered by her frequent tears,
Lay open as she left them, marked with flowers,
Or pencilled down the margin by her hand.
But most I loved the picture of St. Catherine.
She kneeling, while the holy child whose touch
The Virgin guided, on her finger placed
The marriage ring, his face in lovely wonder
Raised questioning to his mother's.

To that place

I crept at noonday. There I treasured all
Linked with Ginevra's memory. 'Twas now
A garland we had woven, now a kerchief
That kept the faint rose odour she had loved.
I vexed my childish brain with pondering o'er
The books she prized; these, histories of Saints,
Temptations, miracles, and martyrdoms.
I peopled all the dark nooks of the palace
With phantoms of their raising. There, concealed
All through the slumberous noontide, first I read
Of Augustine, who heard the voice of God
Speak to him in the garden; and of her,

Holy Teresa, who stood face to face
With Mary's Son, and carried to the tomb
Remembrance of the vision. When I read
How, laying down love, wealth, the pride of birth,
Bowing her shoulders for the cross, this one
Frail Nun obtained a Saint's repute, becoming
Founder of monasteries, and of a host
The spiritual mother, all my soul
Thrilled with the rapturous history. I could dream
Only of mysteries; or, if light shapes
Beckoned me to the world, there slid between
Visions of her who o'er an open book
Hung pondering steadfastly; one pale, fair hand
Outspread upon the page, and one that held
Her brow within its hollow. Womanhood
Came, and my heart's betraying echoes scarce
Answered her loitering footfall. Life grew vague.
Nothing approached me nearly.

The first star

Was a true prophet of thy step, Jacopo!
My visions fled when up the flinty paths
His courser's hoof struck flashes. With a smile

My father greeted him; my mother gave
Her white hand freely, while her laughter mixed
With their gay talk; and I, a space apart,
Smiled him glad welcome, with my every pulse
Answering the cordial music of his voice.
Oh, he was changed! I dared no longer chide
If his bold mirth trod heedlessly too close
To holy things. I stood with eyes abased;
Rebuke awed into silence. He had sprung
Suddenly to full manhood. In his words
There was an athlete's sinew, though they played
With great things carelessly, as a fresh wind
Provokes the sea to laughter, and his pride
Ever seemed well placed, like a castle set
Upon a mountain. All my womanhood
Did homage to his strength. The life that coiled
Lazily at my heart, leapt through my veins
With crest uplift, if mid the halls I heard
His footfall ring. Oh, father, when he left,
Gone was the smile from sweet St. Catherine's lip!
And the grave saints frowned on me; and my thoughts,
Shapen to prayer, put on unholy guise,

Mocking my vain devotion! Marvel not!
I was a child. Ginevra fled the world,
Like a chased dove that calms its panting heart
Under green forest boughs. Life stood unmasked,
And pleasure mocked her, like a garland twined
Round a drained wine cup. As a vine that grows
Over some marble urn, a bird that builds
Under the cornice of some shattered temple,
Making its ruin echo with delight,
So to her heart, rent, filled with bitter dust,
Came one bright hope. Alas! my thrilling soul
Still quivered in the bended bow of life!
Youth was too mighty. I grew faint. My heart
Leapt at a quick word, and light tremors ran
Painfully through my limbs. My brain waxed dizzy
Over my books, and I would ponder hours
Ere I could wrest its meaning from the page
I strove to read. Or, if I knelt to pray,
My aimless thoughts went wandering blindly on,
The prayer I said suspended. Outward things
Unchallenged touched my senses, that dull stupor
Muffled like sleep.

I stood within St. Peter's,
And heard the Miserere. Through the twilight
Burned thirteen starry tapers. One by one,
Amid the chanting of the Lamentations,
These vanished, till the last and brightest, Christ,
Sank into darkness. With that Hope's extinction,
Like a retreating wave, the chant withdrew
Beneath the cave-like shadows. Rippling echoes
Tracked it to silence. Father, on my lips
The stillness pressed as a remorseless hand!
Above, the gray-winged twilight, like a moth
Clung to the arches. I did strive to pray,
And through my soul the slow-paced, cloistered thoughts
Trod, saying "Miserere!" Deep the pause
That from the shores of that hushed music stretched
Like a black-throated chasm. I grew sick
Hearing the echoes sound it! While I gasped,
As 'twere a bird borne over an abyss
On one bruised wing, athwart the chapel roof
Fluttered a voice so sad, my panting heart
Breathed in one gush of tears. I doubt not, Priest!
White angels standing in God's presence then

Leant on their harps and wept! The low notes failed
Exhaustedly. But as they ceased, oh Heaven!
As 'twere a scimitar quick bared, a shaft
Hurled by a giant, a prolonged, loud shriek
Leapt through the gloom, and like a dart rebounding
Fell, shivered into echoes! Holy Mary!
My every pulse thrilled with a separate pain!
All through the crowd a light electric shiver
Passed like a link. All dimly from mine eyes
Fled the dark forms of priest and cardinal
And Heaven's vicegerent in his pontiff robes!
I must have fallen, but for one steadfast arm
Girding my waist like iron. Scarce I marked
How the whole choir, with thick, sore sobs, bewailed
Christ's death. I know not what of sudden brightness
Rushed o'er my dazzled sense. Dispute it not!
I saw the darkness cloven by wings that took
Light like a prism, and when the rifted gloom
Closed on their upward flight, my senses, prone,
Met its returning pressure.

This was April,
And ere my dumb soul spoke again, the grape

Was purple on the hills. Oh, I was weak
As a young child! Jacopo in his arms,
Would bear me to the sea-shore, where I sat
Long, vacant hours, numbering the waves,
Counting the drifting clouds. They sang me songs.
The music pleased me, but the married words
My dull ear noted not. Yet every day
Lifted my prostrate faculties. At last
The old life came to me again, and I
Lived with my books and memories.

Yet, oh heaven!

The dense gloom of the Roman chapel seemed
Stifling my soul. A horror brooded o'er me.
To my weak brain most dark forebodings came,
As night-birds haunt a ruin. As one left
In a dense labyrinth seeks in vain the outlet
As a lost bird that beats its wings against
The black roof of a cavern, so my thought,
Conscious of light, pursued it. Pleasure came,
And Fear uplifting with unsteady hand
Her wan lamp, by its shifting rays transformed
The siren to a spectre. Did I stoop

To pluck a joy that seemed to common eyes
Dewy with innocence, lo, underneath,
There coiled some black temptation! The wide world
Was all a paradise where every tree
Held fruit forbidden. Whither could I fly?
Into dim solitudes, through trooping crowds,
Horror pursued me with extended arms.
Trembling I lingered in Ginevra's chamber,
There forcibly impelled, there paralyzed
By the cold, haunting presence of the dead.
Oh, God! I heard her footsteps track the floor!
Oh, God! I wakened from my sleep to feel
That I had scared away some brooding thing!
And once—believe it, father!—in the moonlight
I saw her in her death-robcs stand and point
Her white, still finger to the pictured bridal!

They said that I grew like her, like the novice
Some still remembered; she who smiled farewell,
Thrusting her white hands through the convent grating!
Like the pale saint who, with the crucifix
Betwixt her palms, spake softly as she trod

The solitary chambers, with her prayers
Coupling the moments; not like her, the bright
Aurora of my childhood, on whose knee
I have lain listless, through my fingers slipping
Pearl chains for rosaries!

Still if I walked .
One step kept pace with mine; or if reclining
Mid the cleft rocks, I heard the sea rehearse
Its ancient song of chaos, every wave
Rhyming its fellow, still my heart took note
Of a timed footfall on the upper shore
Advancing and retreating. If I read,
And from my book glanced suddenly, I thrilled,
Knowing who stood apart, and on my face
Looked with a strange intentness.

Oh, thou world!
Thy warm arms clave to me, thy painted lips
Cheated my senses! To my sleep came fiends
That mocked me with *his* smile, put on his shape,
Spake with his voice, till, starting from my couch,
Thy name, Jacopo, first upon my lip,
I feared to speak God's after! Then came prayers,

Fasts, and harsh penances. There was a chamber
Ginevra loved; a dim, square, lofty room,
Crossed and re-crossed by arches, paven with marbles
Stained in sea hues. One silver shining lamp
That burned behind a column, brake the night
With its still radiance. There, when midnight came,
Crept I as stealthily, with naked feet
Treading the corridors. There my faint soul
Staggered beneath its cross! The niched saints, only,
Might hear my heart shriek as I walled it in!
The marble where my forehead lay kept not
Count of my tears;—and there, when fasts prolonged
Vanquished my sense, while life, the jailor, slept,
Came angels that unlocked the prison doors
And bade my soul go free. Athwart my brain
Flash and withdraw into the cloud of sense
That holds them captive, memories too bright
For human keeping, dumb, sweet dreams that passed
With finger laid on lip. Oh, gracious father,
Great is my faith in penance, that chains down
The senses in their cells, scourges the passions
Into meek virtues, and converts the house

Where worldly guests held revel, to a cloister
Trod by pure visions and up-glancing prayers!

There came release. 'Twas midnight, and I seemed
In dreams to kneel as kneels the Bride of Christ.
Yet, not Madonna, but my sister guided
The hand that placed the marriage ring on mine.
While yet I slept, a sound of many wings
Filled all the air, and at my ear a voice
Chanted a cradle-hymn. Then I awoke
And heard the echoes keep one lingering note!

They told me 'twas a dream, but felt I not
The constant pressure of the bridal ring?
And knew I not, though dim to human eyes,
How bright 'twould shine hereafter? Up to God
I sped my fresh hopes, that, wing-wearied, turned
To earth's most blessed shelter. Priest, as pure
As Catherine, the first nun, I wedded Heaven!
The tresses they have shorn were ne'er unbound
By love's light hand; the beauty that I laid,

As 'twere a blossom, on His holy shrine,
Kept sacred, all, from love's profaning touch!

Last fled I here. With many tears, my mother,
Wouldst thou have stayed me, and Jacopo,—nay,
I was appalled to look on his white lips!
Once, I remember, in my brief novitiate
When by the convent wall, I paused to mark
The singing of a bird, and from above
There dropped a written scroll. Oh saints, what wild,
Idolatrous words defaced its blotted page!
I dared not look upon the writer's name.
'Twas sin to read, I know, for all the morn.
There was that ringing through my unquiet soul
That outvoiced organ, chorister, and priest!

OCTOBER TWILIGHT.

ON mute among the months, October, thou,
Like a hot reaper when the sun goes down
Reposing in the twilight of the year!
Is yon the silver glitter of thy scythe
Drawn thread-like on the west? September comes
Humming those waifs of song June's choral days
Left in the forest, but thy tuneless lips
Breathe only a pervading haze that seems
Visible silence, and thy Sabbath face
Scares swart November, from yon northern hills
Foreboding like a raven. Yellow ferns
Make thee a couch; thou sittest listless there,
Plucking red leaves for idleness; full streams

Coil to thy feet where fawns that come at noon
Drink with upglancing eyes.

Upon this knoll,
Studded with long-stemmed maples, ever first
To take the breeze, I have lain summer hours,
Seeing the blue sky only, and the light
Shifting from leaf to leaf. Tree-top and trunk
Now lift so steadily, the airiest spray
Seems painted on the azure. Evening comes
Up from the valley; over-lapping hills,
Tipped by the sunset, burn like funeral lamps
For the dead day; no pomp of tinsel clouds
Breaks the pure hyaline the mountains gird—
A gem without a flaw—but sharply drawn
On its transparent edge, a single tree
That has cast down its drapery of leaves,
Stands like an athlete with broad arms outstretched,
As if to keep November's winds at bay.
Below, on poised wings, a hovering mist
Follows the course of streams; the air grows thick
Over the dells. Mark how the wind, like one
That gathers simples, flits from herb to herb,

Through the damp valley, muttering the while
Low incantations ! From the wooded lanes
Loiters a bell's dull tinkle, keeping time
To the slow tread of kine ; and I can see
By the rude trough the waters overbrim
The unyoked oxen gathered ; some, athirst,
Stoop drinking steadily, and some have linked
Their horns in playful war. Roads climb the hills,
Divide the forests, and break off, abrupt,
At the horizon ; hither, from below
There comes a sound of lumbering, jarring wheels.
The sound just struggles up the steep ascent,
Then drones off in the distance. Nearer still,
A rifle's rattling charge starts up the echoes,
That flutter like scared birds, and pause awhile
As on suspended wings, ere sinking slow
To their low nests. I can distinguish now
The labourer returning from his toil
With shouldered spade, and weary, laggard foot ;
The cattle straying down the dusty road ;
The sportsman, balancing his idle gun,
Whistling a light refrain, while close beside

His hound with trailing ears, and muzzle dropt,
Follows some winding scent. From the gray cast,
Twilight, up-glancing with dim fearful eyes,
Warns me away.

The dusk sits like a bird

Up in the tree-tops, and swart, elvish shadows
Dart from the wooded pathways. Wraith of day!
Through thy transparent robes the stars are plain;
Along those swelling mounds that look like graves,
Where flowers grow thick in June, thy step falls soft
As the dropt leaves; amid the faded brakes
The wind, retreating, hides, and cowering there,
Whines at thy coming like a hound afraid.

GUIDO SAVELLA.

“Oh! to his fancy
Heated and overwrought, its beauty grew
Warm, living, human! *And he loved a picture,*
Following the wanderings of an erring brain,
His heart went from him, blindly and astray.”

SAVE that with early morn a funeral train
Wound through the gateway, there had reigned all day
Silence unbroken in Savella's house.
The close-drawn curtains hung in motionless folds,
The fountain in the court had ceased to play,
And when eve came, a single lonely taper

Burning through midnight, marked the chamber where
Savella mourned his fair-haired English bride.

There had been marks of fetters on her wrists
As they lay crossed in death, and from her brow
Long tresses had been shaven. At her side
There wept a child that from its infancy
Had never known a mother's fostering love ;
And they who robed her body for the tomb,
Whispered together of a fatal curse
Entailed upon her high-born race for crimes
Now unrecorded.

'Twas the vintage time.

Winter passed on, and early March outbloomed
The June of colder climes. Savella's halls
Still curtained out the sunshine, though a shade
Seemed fallen from their gloom. For if a breeze
Swept through the vaulted chambers, it would bring
Soft laughter, and a sound of children's steps,
And sometimes through the muffling drapery peered
A boy's small face, and now a baby girl
Half balancing, half guarded by his arm,

Leaned from the deep-cut windows, and for sport,
Shook down the rings of her gold-coloured hair.

Change followed change; the delicate shades of grief
Blend imperceptibly, and he who watched
His sorrow as a secret trust, felt not
How every day took something from its keenness.
He scarce remembered when he first had paused
To listen to Francesca's pleading tones,
Or smile when Guido with superior wisdom
Schooled his child sister. He would linger now
With a pleased eye before the glowing pictures
Lining his galleries, and now the boy
Rode forth at even by his father's side,
And when Savella paced the palace gardens
Francesca lay upon his breast, her arms
Clasped on his neck, and her ungathered hair
Sweeping the shoulder where her cheek lay pillowed.

She had an English face, but, oh, not hers
Whose memory yet upon Savella's heart
Lay, a receding shadow! In her glance

There was no changeful light, and her sweet mouth
Smiled even in repose. But Guido seemed
To visibly link the present with the past.
For if he had his father's Roman eye,
His lips were like his mother's, and his voice
Had tones, like hers, unnaturally sweet.
They told how he would steal, when sunset came
To the deep western windows, and there sit,
Leaning his brow upon his outspread palm,
Even as she had done. His smile, his glance,
The wandering gaze that seemed to fathom distance,
The strange, deep reveries that made his life
Shadowy like a dream, his sudden tears
Flowing uncalled, and his unquiet gladness,—
All this resembled her. His very step,
Sounding along the galleries, and pausing
Before the pictures *she* had loved, became
A dread to those who listened, and Savella
Hearing its echoes, turned away to sigh.
Save for each other lone, surrounded ever
By shapes of antique beauty, cherishing
Rare birds and blossoms, with the eager care

Of those who have few human things to love,
The orphans grew together.

And their childhood
Passed, but yet slowly, for they lingered long
In its sweet Eden, and when driven forth
Still dwelt beneath the shadow of its trees.
They bore their childish hearts far into youth ;
They were alone ; and if to Guido's spirit
Came sometimes wild hopes and ambitious thoughts,
They left no withering traces, but sped on,
Even as the shadow of an eagle's wing
Darkens a sunbright valley. Lapse of years
Wrought little change, save that Francesca's brow
Wore the bright seal of girlhood ; that she stepped
With its half-conscious grace, and that she curbed
To womanly pride, the laughter that her eyes
Betrayed, how sweetly ! Save that from his dreams
The boy was half awaked, and as the breeze
Is tremulous in the tree, life at his heart
Made music. Oh, the calm of earlier days,
To his refining senses, seemed the rest
Of one who sleeps into an April morning

And is awaked by melody and light !
Yet still as the unfolding of a flower
His being's growth ; and to the passing eye,
Still Guido was unchanged. For even now,
Under the shadow of the ilex trees,
He would lie dreaming through a summer morn,
Freighting the slow clouds with his indolent fancies.
Or if Francesca with her broidery frame
Stole to his side, would idly mark the grouping
Of leaves and flowers beneath her hand, or listen,
An arm flung o'er his closed lids, while she sang
Love-songs and ballads, else from some old book
Read quaint romances, scraps of passionate verse,
That brought the fire to his lip and eye.
And even now, although no hand reined in
A steed more gallantly, he better loved
Some lone, wild path, where other steps came not,
Than the gay Corso. Now his early dreams
Lay closer to his soul, and he had striven
To give their loveliness a tangible shape ;
But youth still held in leash his fiery spirit,
And with the will to do came not the power.

The first faint efforts of awakening strength
Revealed in fragments of imperfect song,
Rude shapes, and outlined scenery, on the canvass
Left incomplete by an irresolute hand.
All loved the boy; the contadina turned
To smile her salutation as he passed;
The beggar lounging on the palace stair
Bade Mary bless the glorious, gifted child,
As he went by. These loved him for his beauty,
His pride; for pride becomes a noble spirit
Even as a regal port doth royalty.

Pass we their dawn of youth. Savella's place
Was empty at the board. The orphans dwelt
Alone in the old palace. The rapt boy
Had made his manhood as an arch of triumph
Spanning a conqueror's path. There was no lip
But named him reverently; for his songs
Had stirred all Italy, and to his canvass
The gods descended. He was changed by time,
Not less by care and toil. His step had left
Its early pride for the calm, conscious power

Of riper years; and there remained no trace,
In the man's grand proportions, of the slight
And flexible outlines of the unformed child.
Men said his brain was overcharged with thought;
The blue veins branched distinctly on his temples,
His lips had lost their fulness, and the blood
Fled with hot haste unsummoned to his brow.
He had grown captious, difficult, unlike
His former self. The daylight parched him now,
The twilight chilled, and sleep to him was fever;
For he would wake half shrieking, and aroused,
Steal mantled forth into the quiet streets,
Shunning the moonbeams, starting in white fear
From the dim, cowering midnight at the base
Of pedestal and column. Early morn
Found him before his easel.

From without,
Through the looped curtains of his studio came
Faintly the stir of life, and far beneath,
The garden with its fountains, and dark groves,
And winding paths, stretched westward. The high walls
Were white and unadorned; the vaulted ceiling

Kept step and voice with a deep roll like thunder.
There were no draperies save those that hung
Over the windows, and before the door
Of a small inner room, and there, low bending,
A statue caught back on her lifted arm
The gathered folds, and finger laid on lip,
Gazed in upon the artist. A Madonna,
Over whose brow a dark blue mantle fell,
Hung in a deep recess.

There was a magic
About the face—a picture may have such—
For on its down-cast lids the gazer's heart
Dwelt earnestly, and with a passionate wish
To see them rise. Hour after hour, 'twas told,
Guido stood rapt before it, and 'twas whispered
Throughout the household, that when even came,
And he awoke from those strange reveries
To steal forth to the gardens, his faint step
Scarce left its impress on the moistened sod
Girding his favourite fountain. As a cloud
That captures the retreating light of day,
His eye still kept its lustre; but quick pulses

Glanced wavering o'er his temples, and the dew
Came readily to his brow. He would speak low,
Pacing alone, and sometimes in his glance
There crouched an indistinct terror, or awhile
He seemed to sleep, and but remembered, waking,
A light hand in his own, soft lips that touched
His hot veins and they cooled. But this was dreaming;
And when ere long Francesca came, he wound
His arm about her waist, and with a smile
Talked as she loved to hear him, playfully,
Yet mingling wisdom with his sportive words;
Sending athwart the current of deep thought
Fleets of grotesque, capricious fantasies,
As boys float mimic barks across a river.
Yet even then the delicate chain of fancy
Would seem to snap asunder, and he sought
Bewildered the lost links. But knowing not
Their mother's history, she who listened deemed
Only that constant toil had vexed his brain,
And smiled, and soothed him, and with earnest wiles
Chased back the gathering gloom. If now they named
Savella's wife, his very lips turned white.

The chamber where her portrait hung was closed,
The key had rusted in the lock. A vail
Hung, like a pall, before the pictured face.

'Twas sunset, and the mellowed sound of bells,
The lowing of worn cattle driven to drink,
Came from the vineyards and the far Campagna.
'Twas still in Guido's studio; not a sound
Rose from below, but loitered as it came.
The echoes caged within the dome-like ceiling
Slept upon folded wings. A picture stood
Half finished on the easel, but the artist
Grown weary had gone forth.

Light steps ascended

The marble stair, the drapery looped back
Upon the nymph's white arm, waved, and Francesca
Lifting its folds, passed through. The polished floor
Imaged her feet like water as she passed;
She paused before the easel. On the canvass,
New-limned, a woman in the Roman garb
Sat by a fount and watched gray oxen drinking.
Her hands lay clasped upon the marble rim,

Her veiled eyes were cast down, and at her feet
A contadino, stretched upon the grass,
Pillowed his head upon his folded arms.
With ripe lips dropped apart, Francesca gazed
Smiling upon her beauty's counterpart;
Then with a sudden impulse, from the peasant
Whose lids were darkly outlined on her cheek,
Turned to the pictured Virgin, and first saw
How like her own Madonna's features were!
She started, and with finger laid on lip,
Pondered a space; then, pausing not to question
If there were aught irreverent in her thought,
Stepped upon tiptoe through the room, and vanished

The curtains were drawn close when Guido entered.
Through their large flutes the tempered light came in
As through a wave. Arch, wall, and glassy column
Stood like translucent amber. Guido paused,
Resting upon the threshold. He had risen,
That morn to a new being; to the sound
Of rhythms sweeter than the mirth of brooks;
To the low voice of songs that thrilled for flight,

To the light trip of dreams like trooping zephyrs.
And every thought sang, jubilant, as it rose,
And every dream its gossamer wings unfolding,
Warmed in his spirit's sunshine. Like a band
Of nymphs that dance to music, all his fancies
Came with a twin-born melody. For rhythm
Seemed his soul's natural language, and it flowed
Effortless as the harmonies of a bird.
And so the poet's day passed vision-like,
Filled with the bright confusion of a dream.
Now worn and fever-flushed, he would have called
His wild thoughts to their nests, and bade sweet peace
Descend like dew at evening. But in vain.
Wearily crept the sunshine to his eye;
The fall of footsteps down the narrow street,
Each varied tone in the great city's voice,
Fell like a pang on nerves the lightest touch
Now thrilled to painfulness. The windless air
Pressed on his forehead like a steadfast hand,
And still resolving rest, he still thought on,
Wearied to pain.

The cool, half-mystical light

Was pleasant to his senses. With bent head
He paced the room. He looked not towards Madonna.
With eyes cast downward steadfastly, he seemed
To wrestle with wild thoughts. Thus for a space.
He paused, turned suddenly, and looked up. A cry
At his heart's threshold died. He stood transfixed,
With lips blanched white with terror.

What stood there,
Within the columned niche? Madonna's picture
Was gone, an empty frame hung in its place!
What stood with folded hands? A mantle fell
Squarely across the brow, and dark blue folds
Trailed to the pavement!

Softly! so! the echoes
Are listening from above! His step scarce roused them.
Nearer, with hushed heart! In the uncertain light
He thought to see it vanish, but, unchanged,
The veiled shape stood like marble. O'er his eyes
He passed his burning hand. Another step!
One more. Ah, heaven, the robe stirred on her bosom!
Now could he mark the rosy line dividing

The palms together laid. His breath came fast.

Thus stood she in his dreams!

Lo, the fringed lids
Rose slowly, and eyes filled with love and laughter
Turned to his own! He bent, with outstretched arms.
A smile mocked from the lip, then rapid blushes
Burned, and grew pale, as if in terror sprang
The veiled shape to his side, and flinging back
The mantle, clinging to his breast, cried "Guido!
Dear Guido!" and in hollow echoes died
Over the vaulted ceiling, "Guido! Guido!"
He bent her light form backward o'er his arm,
And looked into her face. Like a crushed serpent,
Under his firm teeth writhed the nether lip.
His grasp was iron. With her pleading eyes
She watched him silently. He flung her off,
And, tossing a wild hand to heaven, rushed forth.
She heard his fleet step echo through the halls,
And shrieking followed.

Still Savella's house
Stands in the seven-hilled city. There, together,

Dwell twain alone, a brother and a sister.
These hold no revels and receive no guest.
One is a man with vacant, wandering eyes,
Whose face is like a boy's; his hair's linked rings
Fall to his bosom; one, calm-browed and pale,
A woman on whose laughter-moulded lip
Joy lies asleep. Her life seems blent with his.
She hath no thought but for her mute companion.
And if he walks, her shoulder is his prop;
If he would sleep, she charms his weary lids
With singing, or, reclining at his side,
Under the ilex boughs, reads scraps of song
Whose musical rhymes are pleasant to his ear,
Their sense, alas, unheeded! And, the while,
He will beat slow time with his hand, or echo
Her low words softly, as a child repeats
Its teacher's accents. His is not the gloom
That blinds a common mind. His soul shines forth
Like starlight o'er the ruins of a Rome;
Like a pale moon through tempests, sending gleams
Over the waste of madness, and still feebly
Ruling its tides. Still, nature hath a charm

For his dim sense, and still unconsciously
He freights the bird's song and the blossom's fragrance
With his heart's rich thanksgiving. Flower and herb
He cherishes with strange love. He will not crush
The meanest weed that flings its pendulous spray
Over his path—and all things gentle love him,
From the grave hound that guards him, to the birds
That, from low boughs, the while he flings them bounty,
Eye him askance. His pencil still beguiles
Long hours, grotesquely on the canvass blending
Weird, goblin fancies with half-grasped conceptions,
Gloriously fair. The very words he speaks
Are chosen for their beauty, and the rhythms
He loved, seem ever lingering on his lips.
Thought gleams in faint Auroras, and hope calls
Their light day's luminous herald. Oh! the flame
Burns low upon the altar, Memory clasps
Her blazoned missal, and the priest-like voice
Of Reason dies in silence! There are heard
No more amid her aisles fast-crowding thoughts,
No more the noble anthems of her worship;
- And Guido's soul is like some dim cathedral

That keeps with faint, sweet light the hush of prayer
After the prayer hath ceased; the breath of incense
Burned upon shrines, the solemn, deep vibrations
Of music that falls trembling into stillness!

A TRUE STORY OF A FAWN.

DOWN from a mountain's craggy brow
His homeward way a hunter took,
By a path that wound to the vales below
At the side of a leaping brook.
Long and sore had his journey been,
By the dust that clung to his forest green,
By the stains on his brodered moccasin;
And over his shoulder his rifle hung,
And pouch and horn at his girdle swung.

The eve crept westward; soft and pale
The sunset poured its rosy flood

Slanting over the wooded vale;
And the weary hunter stood
Looking down on his cot below,
Watching his children there at play,
Watching the swing on the chestnut bough
Flit to and fro through the twilight gray,
Till the dove's nest rocked on its quivering spray.

Faint and far through the forest wide
Came a hunter's voice, and a hound's deep cry;
Silence, that slept in the rocky dell,
Scarcely waked as her sentinel
Challenged the sound from the mountain side.
Over the valleys the echo died,
And a doe sprang lightly by
And cleared the path, and panting stood
With her trembling fawn by the leaping flood.

She spanned the torrent at a bound,
And swiftly onward, winged by fear,
Fled as the ery of the deep-mouthed hound
Fell louder on her ear;

And pausing by the waters deep,
Too slight to stem their rapid flow,
Too weak to dare the perilous leap,
The fawn sprang wildly to and fro,
Watching the flight of her lithe-limbed doe.

Now she hung o'er the torrent's edge
And sobbed and wept as the waves shot by,
Now she paused on the rocky ledge
With head erect, and steadfast eye,
Listening to the stag-hound's cry..
Close from the forest the deep bay rang,
Close in the forest the echoes died,
And over the pathway the brown fawn sprang
And crouched at the hunter's side.

Deep in the thickets the boughs unclasped
Leapt apart with a crashing sound,
Under the lithe vines, sure and fast,
Came on the exulting hound;

Yet baffled, stopped to bay and glare
Far from the torrent's bound;
For the weeping fawn still crouching there
Shrank not nor fled, but closer pressed
And laid her head on the hunter's breast.

THE TOWER OF LAHNECK.

A PARAPHRASE.

PERCHED on a rock, a river at its base,
Stands Castle Lahneck. 'Twas a robber's keep
In the old time. An outlawed baron lodged
His train of knights, and hostages grew gray,
And victims plead and died, where limp grass waves
Like signals from the windows, or grows rank
Around a horrible pit digged deep beneath
The one tall tower.

One fair May afternoon,

An English stranger with her German guide
Trode breathlessly the difficult path that winds
Up to the ruined walls. The two were friends,
And with light laughter and familiar jests
Made the way pleasant, till they paused at last
Under the castle's shadow, to look down
On the blue Lahn that widens to the Rhine,
The Rhine itself beyond, the broad, fair scene
Outspread below. The English girl spoke first
After long silence; with clasped hands, and head
Thrown back, retreating slow, and with her eye
Measuring the lone high tower. "Oh, Margaret!
Eagles by daylight, and gray owls that blink
Under the o'er-bright moon, on yon great height
Blindly possess the wealth that would enrich
A human soul for ever!"

Through a maze

Of matted shrubbery they forced a path
Close to the ruin. A projecting wall
Sheltered a low-arched door, that, cloaked by vines,
And half way blocked with slippery stones, framed in
Intensest darkness. With light, fearless tread,

Ida, the blue-eyed stranger, leading through,
Crossed the rude threshold. Lo ! a massy stair,
Far as the eye could follow, up the wall
Wound to the summit !

They were young and gay,
And never thought of danger. Ida first,
They scaled the steep flight, singing as they trod
Snatches of song. Their sweet notes filled the tower,
Making faint tinkling echoes as they dropt
Through its dim well of silence. Safe at last,
They stood upon the turret roof, and looked
Over the low broad parapet.

While one
With tears of joyous pride and outstretched hand,
Hamlet and river, vale and distant mount
Named rapidly, the other wept, oppressed
By the vague, restless sadness that to some
Comes linked with beauty.

Warning shadows grew
Long on the meadows while they talked of home,
Minding each other of the tedious path,

And yet they lingered. Margaret had crept
Close to the edge, and Ida, on her shoulder
Resting a light hand, forward leant with looks
Piercing the distance downward.

A strange dread

Thrilled each alike. Both from the parapet
Shrank with one impulse. From the vaults beneath
Crept a light, silent shudder. Was it time
For the roused earth to jostle from her breast
This sepulchre of crime? The turret rocked
Under their feet, and a loud thunderous roar
Rushed upward like the swift flame shot to heaven
Out of a crater! When it died away
In a deep trembling, all the ruin seemed
Alive with swarming echoes, but these dropped
Into their nooks, and from below again
Welled the deep silence.

Then the German rose,

And, tottering to the stairway, shrieked to see
Its last rude vestige, loosened by her tread,
Plunge through the void, and Ida, at the cry,

Lifting her wan face, to the chasm's edge
Stole fearfully. A black, fixed gloom half way
Filled the deep, well-like tower ; gray threads of light
Drawn through the ragged crevices, or caught
On the vine branches, seemed the gossamer skein
The spider wove from wall to wall, or spread
Over the ivy. They who from its depths
Withdrew their looks, each in the other's eyes
Searching for comfort, read the sharp dismay
Neither had spoken.

Hiding in her soul

One hope that like a precious perfume might
Exhale in the disclosing, Ida crept
Back to the turret's verge, and steadfastly
Screening her eyes from the descending sun,
Looked o'er the parapet. The wooded hills
Sprinkled with sunshine, and the vales between
Lapped in dim lovely shade, seemed overspread
With a faint ghastliness. Except the crow
Flapping above the forest, or the wings
Of the fierce eagles, or the bird that flew
Dipping along the river, nothing stirred

Over the landscape, and her straining gaze
Dropped listless downward.

Nay! upon the path
Tracking the mountain, some one stirred beneath,
Slowly approaching! Both together leant
Over the parapet, and called aloud.
Alas! the thin, light air refused to keep
The burden of their voices. He, below,
Never looked up. But could their frantic cries
Have fathomed the deep distance, it had then
Availed them not. For it was only Kranz,
The deaf and dumb from Lahnstein, seeking flowers,
To sell them at the inn.

They watched the twilight
As 'twere a deluge, while its flowing tides
Flooded the valleys, and crept up the front
Of the tall turret. Barge on barge had gone
Down the calm river; from the mill above
Forth came the miller, and walked loitering home
Under the mountain's shadow; peasants drove
Their cattle from the pasture; children played
In the near fields, and once a fisherman

Rowed through the castle's bright reflection cast
Over the Lahn. And no one paused for them.
The steersman had been busy at his helm,
The miller thought of home.

They had strayed far
That sunny day; none in the distant town
They left behind, knew whither, or would think
To seek them here.

The stars shone thick above.
The gloom below was studded here and there
By clustered village lights; the firefly lit
His lamp among the osiers. Ida still
Crouched by the parapet, her folded arms
Pillowing her head. She had awhile exchanged
Her sorrow for another's, and in thought
Mourned for her own lost self, and wearied time
With questions of her fate. Once Margaret spoke
Words of faint comfort, but she, looking up,
Answered with dreary smiling, "Hope thou not,
Unless we make, like rosy Ganymede,
Steeds of the eagles!" Now bright floods of light
Streamed from the windows of the Lahnstein inn

Over the waters. There the merry guests
Sat quaffing Rheinwein.

Midnight from the skies
Swept like a solemn vision. Ere the dawn,
A low white mist had settled on the vales,
And all that day no traveller came to look
At the lone ruin. They were wild with thirst,
Faint for the lack of food, when, still as dew,
Another eve dropt round them. Since the noon
Margaret had stirred not, but with blank cold eyes
Turned to the misty river, and hands locked
Over her knee, sat patient, though aloud
Ida wailed out, or, leaning from the tower,
Stretched forth her arms towards the distant home
Whence they had strayed, or, frozen by despair,
Prostrate lay silent till dismay again
Struck at her cowering soul. But now she rose,
And close upon its brink, looked steadily
Down the black chasm. From the vaults stole up
An odour of damp earth, against the walls
Beat the blind bats, and startled by her tread
An owl rushed upward with its boding scream,

And wheeling round the tower, fled fast and far
Toward the Black Forest. Whether she had leant
Over the gulf too hardily, and, scared
By the near flight of that unholy bird,
Swerved and stepped falsely, whether desperate fear
Then fixed the wavering purpose in her soul
God saw, but Ida, starting at a shriek
That drowned the owl's hoot, only looked to know
She was alone.

What desolate hours were hers,
Who knelt down in the starlight, stretching forth,
Her shuddering arms to Heaven, and from that time
Patiently suffered!

Was she saved at last?
What say the bargemen floating down the Lahn,
The boatmen at the Ferry, to and fro
Hourly plying, or the rustic groups
That loiter as they pass? To their belief,
Since from its heights the robber baron swept
With his hawk's eye the valleys, never foot
Has trod the ruined summit. Only, once,
Albert, the fisher, resting on his oar

After the day's toil, marvelled to discern
A wild she-eagle, wheeling from the clouds,
Sit screaming to her mate with outspread wings
Where the red sunset crowns the Tower of Lahneck!

THE CHAPLET OF BRONZE.

“Oh, could I melt my spirit into song
And dying triumph!” The slow silvery notes
Rose from her lips as smoke rings from a censer.
Gay dames and gallants whispered, the young nobles
Stood with averted eyes, and the rude crowd
Aped their indifference. Holding with her looks
The scorn that coiled to spring, she sang, and drave
Melody to the utmost bounds of sound,
Marcia, the Florentine. The orchestra
Pealed forth its loudest, but triumphantly
As the white sea-bird skims the waves, her voice
Outrode the storm of music.

Suddenly,

A note shot upward, and suspended hung
As if on poised wings. A single voice
Cried "Bravo!" as slow dropped from that great height
It seemed to fathom silence. Then upborne
By music, like a bird that's swung to rest
By the lulled waves, the singer's voice kept on
Swelling and falling with the sound that bare it.
Low bent the lover to his lady's ear,
And she sat trifling with her gilded fan.
All through the indifferent crowd, above, below,
Only averted faces met her eye
Who had been wont to hold the multitude
By her sweet voice as in a silver leash.
With scarce a bend of her white neck she turned
And passed out from their sight.

The painted curtain

Swept to the footlamps, and the orchestra
Thundered again. But to and fro the crowd
Swayed with mute restlessness. Some one cried out
"Amalia!" and a thousand voices joined,
"Amalia!" to the gilded ceiling, slow,
Crept back the screen of drapery.

There were fountains,
Green groves, and arbours, in the scene before them,
With what seemed moonlight shimmering over all.
And through one avenue that pierced the distance
A single note came floating.

'Twas a child
That, up the aisle advancing, to the footlamps
Drew near, and with her hands locked carelessly
Sang with a fearless joyfulness. Her voice
Was fresh as May-winds, wilder than the lark
That swoops and circles in its upward flight,
Delirious with music. Scarce the ear
Marked how through labyrinths of song it held
One clue of melody; its notes like pearls
Strung on the silken thread they half concealed.
Her voice was but the sail her happy spirit
Urged to its utmost through the waves of song;
When Marcia sang, each silver arrow sped
True to the mark, but these seemed flung at random;
No bird that sings amid the summer leaves
E'er voiced his spirit with such deep delight;
And when she ceased, and the loud orchestra

Took up the strain, the multitude o'erwhelmed it
With a continuous thunder.

Soft, a voice!

And through the distant scenery came a form
That paused midway, and with white, lifted arms
Held up what seemed a crown of woven leaves.
Then "Marcia! Marcia!" fled from lip to lip,
And with the tempest of her shouted name
The high walls trembled. Her magnificent head
Bent to the crowd's applauses, as the prow
Of some grand vessel sinks to meet the waves;
And lifting high the wreath, she cried, "Come hither!
Hither, Amalia!"

With meek folded arms,
Low bent the singer.

Yet suspended hung
Over her brow the fatal type of fame,
The laurel crown, till Marcia smiled. It fell,—
Not fluttering slow, but with a sudden quickness,
And as it dropped, loud thunders of applause
Blent with the crash of music. Some stood still;
For through the tumult a prolonged wild shriek

Rose, faintly audible. 'Twas but a fancy!
Still Marcia smiled, and still Amalia bent.
The smile seemed graven upon Marcia's lip.
And now Amalia, sinking to her knee,
Bent lower, lower, lower, till her brow
Pressed down the border of the robes that swept
From Marcia's zone, and Marcia had no rival!

JULIETTE.

WHERE the rough crags lift, and the sea-mews call,
Yet frowns Earl Hubert's castle tall,
Close at the base of its western wall

 The chafed waves stand at bay;
And the May-rose twined in its banquet hall

 Dips to the showering spray.
For the May-rose springs, and the ivy clings,
 And the wall-flower flaunts in the ruined bower,
And the sea-bird foldeth her weary wings

 Up in the stone-gray tower;
Scaling an arch of the postern rude

 A wild vine drops to the water's flow,

Deep in the niches the blind owls brood,
And the fringing moss hangs low,
Where stout Earl Hubert's banner stood
Five hundred years ago !

Out from the castle's western wall
Jutteth a tower round and tall,
And leading up to the parapet
By a winding turret stair,
Over the sea there looketh yet
A chamber small and square,
Where the faint daylight comes in alone
Through a narrow slit in the solid stone ;
And here, old records say,
Earl Hubert bore his wayward child
From courts and gallants gay ;
That, guarded by the breakers wild,
And cloistered from her lover's arms,
Here might she mourn her wasted charms,
Here weep her youth away.

"One ! two !" said the sentinel,
Watching the night from the eastern tower.

Up in the turret a solemn knell
Tolled for the parting hour;
Over the ocean its echo fell,
One! two!—like a silver bell
Chiming afar in the sea-nymph's bower.

Shrill and loud was the sea-bird's cry,
The watch-dog bayed as the moon rose high,
The great waves swelled below;
And the measured splash of a dipping oar
Broke softly through their constant roar,
And paused beneath the shade
Flung westward by that turret hoar
Where slept the prisoned maid.
The sentinel paced to and fro
Under the castle parapet,
But, in her chamber, Juliette
Heard not the tramp of his clanging foot,
Nor the watch-dog baying near:
Only the sound of a low-toned lute
Stole to her dreaming ear.

The moon rode up as the night wore on,
Looking down with a blinding glare
Into that chamber still and lone,
Touching the rough-hewn cross of stone,
And the prayer beads glittering there;
The loosened waves of the sleeper's hair,
And the curve of her shoulder, white and bare.

She dreamed! she dreamed! that dreary keep
Melted away in the calm moonbeams;
The sea-bird's call and the wave's hoarse sweep,
Changed for the lull of a forest deep,
And the pleasant voice of streams.
She seemed, at rest by a mossy stone,
To watch the blood-red sun go down,
And hang on the verge of the horizon
Like a ruby set in a golden ring;
To hear the wild birds sing
Up in the larch boughs, loud and sweet,
Over a turf where the soft waves beat
With a sound like a naiad's dancing feet.

For here and there on its winding way
Down by dingle and shady nook,
Under the white thorn's dropping spray
Glittered the thread of a slender brook,
And scarce a roebuck's leap beyond,
Close to the brink of its grassy bound,
She heard her lover's chiding hound,
His bugle's merry play.
Oh, it was sweet again to be
Under the free blue skies !
She turned on her pillow restlessly,
And the tears to her sleeping eyes
Came welling up, as the full drops start
At spring's first smile from a fountain's heart.

Up rose the maid in her dreamy rest,
And flung a robe o'er her shoulders bare,
And gathered the threads of her floating hair,
Ere, with a foot on the turret stair
She paused, then onward pressed,
As the tones of a soft lute broke again
Through the deeper chords of the voiceful main.

Steep and rude was the perilous way,
Through loopholes square and small
The night looked into the turret gray,
And over the massive wall
In blocks of light the moonbeams lay,
But the changeful ghosts of the showering spray,
And the measured play of the waters dim
Rippled and glanced on the ceiling grim.

The moon looked into her sleeping eyes,
The night wind stirred her hair;
And wandering blindly, Juliette,
Close on the verge of the parapet,
Stood without in the open air.
Under the blue arch of the skies,
Save for the pacing sentinel,
Save for the ocean's constant swell,
There seemed astir no earthly thing.
Below, the great waves rose and fell,
Scaling ever their craggy bound,
But scarce a zephyr's dipping wing
Broke the silver crust of the sea beyond;

And in her life-like dream,
The maiden now had wandered on
To the brink of a slender stream,
Then pausing, stayed her eager foot,
For with the brook's sweet monotone
Mingled the soft voice of a lute,
And where the level sunbeams played
Over the lap of a lawny glade,
A hound lay sleeping in the shade.

Rocked by the light waves to and fro,
Scarcely an arrow's flight from shore,
Her lover in his bark below
Paused, resting on the oar,
Watching the foam wreaths dash and fall
Like shattered stars from the castle wall.
As higher yet he raised his eyes,
Jesu! he started with affright;
For, painted on the midnight skies,
Seemed hovering in the tremulous light
A figure small, and angel white!

Against the east lay far and dim,
Touched by the moon's uncertain ray,
The airy form, the turret grim.
Doubtful he paused a minute's space;
Then rowed towards the castle's base,
But checked his oar midway,
And gazing up at the parapet,
Shouted the one word, "Juliette!"

Lute, baying hound, and restless deep,
Each gave the clue bewildered thought
Had followed through the maze of sleep,
And, by her lulled ear faintly caught,
Her lover's voice its echo wrought.
She heard him call, she saw him stand
With smiling lip and beckoning hand,
And closer pressed, and, dreaming yet,
From the green margin of the stream,
From the steep verge of the parapet,
Sprang forward with a scream!
Then once again the deep bell tolled
Up in the turret gray and old,

And mingled with its lingering knell,
The echoed cry, half-heard, half-lost,
Startled the weary sentinel
Now slumbering at his post.
But wakened from his dreamful rest,
He deemed the sound some wandering ghost
Haunting the shades of sleep ;
For like a bird upon its nest
The hushed air brooded o'er the deep,
And to his drowsy ear there erept
Only the voice of the choral waves,
Only the drip of the spray that wept,
And the ripples that sang through the weedy caves.
Nor marked he, ere again he slept,
The muffled dip of a hasty oar,
A steed's quick tramp along the shore.
When morning came, a shallop's keel
Grated the edge of the pebbly strand ;
A maid's small foot, and a knight's armed heel
Were traced upon the sand.

PRAYER.

I HAVE a thought of one who drawing close
Over her brow the sackloth, in its folds
Crouched, shutting out from her refusing eyes
God's gift of sunshine. While the all-pitying skies
Wooped her with light she would not look upon,
While earth entreated her, and passing winds
Plucked at her garments, and around her flung
Invisible arms, light, urgent, clasping arms,
Her heart made answer:—I have lain so long
On thy cold breast, Despair, did I arise
I should reel wildly, staggering with cramped limbs

Through the white, glaring sunshine. Hide me, night !
Lest the full glories of the universe
Smite me with blindness, and exulting earth
Under the blue triumphal arch of heaven
Victoriously passing, blast my sense
With her insulting gladness. Once I prayed ;
Once when dismay, want, death, pressed me so close,
I faced them in mere madness, and beholding,
From mine appallèd soul sent up a shriek
That *must* have pierced the hollow ear of space,
Startling the angels, holding in suspense
Awhile the eternal harmonies. Vain heart !
Could the mute prayer that on its fiery track
Followed in trembling haste, prevail so far ?
Amid the roll of twice ten thousand harps
Struck by white-handed seraphim, the voice
Of that unfathomed sea of human woe
Making perpetual moan about His throne,
And surging to His footstool, dost thou dream
That its weak cry rose audibly ?

Did sleep

On her imploring senses lightly rest

His hand in benediction? The still air
To her astonished gaze grew all instinct,
Moted with airy forms for ever drawn
Up, by some genial influence. With bent heads,
With hands clasped mutely, and looks downward dropt,
Else searching space, onward they pressed, and drew
Her rapt soul with them. Tears and sighs fell thick,
Mixed with low broken murmurs, and a sound,
Distinct, of music that flowed clearly on,
Like a glad singing stream that lifts its voice
Amid the mourning of sere autumn boughs
Bent with wet leaves and rain. The dense, dull air,
As 'twere a vail, they parted, and it lay
Above the earth like the dusk cloud that hangs
Over some populous mart. And upward still
Through that black space, of which the hue of night
Is a pale mock! And she who fled with them,
Whither, she questioned not, from that great height
Back glancing, saw the universe as one
Who, looking from a mountain top, beholds
Faint clustering lights, that, twinkling through the gloom,
Mark where a city stands. And upward still!

Till through the cloaking dark a sword of light
Flashed suddenly. Then over and around,
There shined the brightness of ten thousand suns
All concentrate, and her scared spirit stood
In the full courts of heaven! *She* might not look
On its great glory, but the Seraphim
That leant upon their harps, forever there
Turned with bright solemn faces, lost, transfused
Into one rapturous thought. *She* only saw
How all the assembled prayers of all the worlds
Entreated, silent. Various their guise;
Some with pure eyes uplift, that dared to look
Straight on Divinity, and some with dust
On their pale foreheads. There were infant prayers
Crowned with faint halos; saintly prayers, that might,
But for some traces of forgotten tears,
Have swelled the ranks of Heaven. While yet she
looked,
On the pale shore of light there stood a Form
Forlorn, close mantled, that with tottering steps
Drew nearer. Hers! she knew it well! her heart
Shrank with a deadly fear. Oh God! the prayer

That on the steps of the mad shriek that bore
Woe, horror, and defiance up to Heaven,
Followed with faint entreaty! That weak cry,
That mute despairing thing that from her heart
Scarce struggled to her lips, and there fell prone
As one across a threshold! Staggering on
With its pale hands uplift, closer it drew;
And, while she looked to see it thrust without
Into surrounding darkness, rapt and calm
Stood the ranked angels. Near, oh God, it came!
Then with the mien of her who touched His robe
When the crowd pressed Him, springing to the throne,
With a low cry fell prostrate!

· In their sheaths
Why slept the keen swords of the cherubim?
Lo, every knee was bowed! round every brow
There bloomed fresh amaranth, from every lip
Burst such transcendent melody, the stars
Grew musical with its echoes, and dull earth
Dreamed of it in her slumber. Last of all
Rose that pale Form, and cast the mantle back,

And drank in the pure light with steadfast eyes,
And showed God's seal, that, stamped upon its brow,
Burned like a star.

There was great joy in Heaven.

THEODORA.

SINCE we know her for an angel
 Bearing meek the common load,
Let us call her, Theodora,
 Gift of God!

Still so young that every summer
 Is a rose upon her brow,
All her days are blooms detaching
 From a bough.

She is very slight, and graceful
As the bending of a fern,
As the marble figure drooping
O'er an urn.

In her eyes are tranquil shadows
Lofty thoughts alone can make,
Like the darkness thrown by mountains
O'er a lake.

If you speak, the slow returning
Of her spirit from afar
To their depths, is like the advent
Of a star.

No one marvels at her beauty;
Blended with a perfect whole,
Beauty seems the just expression
Of her soul.

For her lightest word or fancy,
Unarrayed for human ear,
Might be echoed by an angel
Watching near.

Be a theme however homely,
It is glorious at her will,
Like a common air transfigured
By a master's skill.

And her words, severely simple
As a drapery Grecian-wrought,
Show the clear symmetric outline
Of her thought.

To disguise her limbs with grandeur
Would seem strange as to dispose
Gold and velvet round a statue's
Pale repose.

But a robe of simplest texture
Should be gathered to her throat,
And her rippled locks part braided,
Part afloat.

While a pendent spray of lilies
In their folds should be arrayed,
Or a waxen white camelia
Lamp their shade.

EOLIE.

OH, you are welcome as the dew
To the worn feet of pilgrim day ;
And wild and fresh, as flowers that keep
The virgin bloom and breath of May.
Yet wilful as a hawk set free
Ere whistle lure, or huntsman tame her.
Capricious as the bridal smile
Spring half denies the skies that claim her,
You've slept since morning, unbetrayed
By waving grass or whispering tree,
You're loitering now through grove and glade ;
Wild Eolie !

Oh, we were playmates long ago !
And then I chased your flying feet
Over the brave rock-terraced hills,
Over the valleys, green and sweet.
Your kisses woke me if I slept
Where boughs unclasp, and shadows play,
And, starting from my childish dreams,
I heard your low laugh far away.
Most gentle in your wily mirth,
Yet elfin, half, you seemed to me,
I loved you more than I can tell,
Wild Eolie !

I love you still ; when even comes
I hear you tread my chamber floor ;
You sweep aside my curtain's fold,
And turn the page I linger o'er.
For sunset is our trysting time ;
Our tryst we keep till stars convene,
Till, Thetis-like, from deeps of blue
Upwends the silver-footed queen.

Breaking the crystal calm of night,
As light wings break a glassy sea,
Your low voice hymns me to my rest,
Wild Eolie!

When through the heaven's serenest blue
Move car-like clouds with lingering flight,
I image you a nymph like those
That urge the shell of Amphitrite.
At morn you are a huntress fleet,
And, cloistered from the heats of noon,
You seem at night a sister pale,
Low chanting to the haloed moon.
By morn, and noon, and saintly night,
I image what I cannot see ;
And give your elfin tones a soul,
Wild Eolie!

SUMMER.

THE early spring hath gone ; I see her stand
Afar off on the hills, white clouds, like doves,
Yoked by the south wind to her opal car,
And at her feet a lion and a lamb
Couched, side by side. Irresolute spring hath gone !
And summer comes like Psyche, zephyr-borne
To her sweet land of pleasures.

She is here !

Amid the distant vales she tarried long,
But she hath come, oh joy !—for I have heard
Her many-chorded harp the livelong day

Sounding from plains and meadows, where, of late,
Rattled the hail's sharp arrows, and where came
The wild north wind careering like a steed
Unconscious of the rein. She hath gone forth
Into the forest, and its poisèd leaves
Are platformed for the zephyr's dancing feet.
Under its green pavilions she hath reared
Most beautiful things; the spring's pale orphans lie
Sheltered upon her breast; the bird's loud song
At morn outsoars his pinion, and when waves
Put on night's silver harness, the still air
Is musical with soft tones. She hath baptized
Earth with her joyful weeping. She hath blessed
All that do rest beneath the wing of Heaven,
And all that hail its smile. Her ministry
Is typical of love. She hath disdained
No gentle office, but doth bend to twine
The grape's light tendrils, and to pluck apart
The heart-leaves of the rose. She doth not pass
Unmindful the bruised vine, nor scorn to lift
The trodden weed; and when her lowlier children
Faint by the way-side like worn passengers,

She is a gentle mother, all night long
Bathing their pale brows with her healing dew.
The hours are spendthrifts of her wealth ; the days
Are dowered with her beauty.

Priestess ! queen !

Amid the ruined temples of the wood,
She hath rebuilt her altars, and called back
The scattered choristers, and over aisles
Where the slant sunshine like a curious stranger
Glided through arches and bare choirs, hath spread
A roof magnificent. She hath awaked
Her oracle, that, dumb and paralyzed,
Slept with the torpid serpents of the lightning,
Bidding his dread voice, nature's mightiest,
Speak mystically of all hidden things
To the attentive spirit.

There is laid

No knife upon her sacrificial altar,
And from her lips there comes no pealing triumph ;
But to those crystal halls where silence sits

Enchanted, hath arisen a mingled strain
Of music, delicate as the breath of buds,
And on her shrines the virgin hours lay
Odours and exquisite dyes, like gifts that kings
Send from the spicy gardens of the East.

LADY CLARE.

I'LL drink a blithe bridal to you, Lady Clare,
Ere the priest dons his gown and the marriage-bells
call ;
While the bridemaids ravel the snood from your hair,
And the bridegroom stands waiting your step in the
hall !
I scorn you nor mourn you, nor praise nor reprove,
I drink to the lips that first wiled me to love ;
But the lute of your love-tones no dearer shall be
Than the bound of the stag down the craggy ravine,
The cry of my sleuth hound, my horn winded free,
Upstarting the doe from her covert of green
The hawk you've unhooded plumes wing for the air :
I drink a blithe bridal to you, Lady Clare !

Gray clings the mist to the river; the cloud

That trails from the mountain is black as despair;
Your bird keeps its perch, and your hound whines aloud,
And the ravens croak out from the wood, Lady Clare!
Faint o'er the pavement the daylight is thrown
'Mid columns and arches, through doorways of stone;
Faint on the walls, and the hunting-knives laid

On antlers suspended, scarce shown through the gloom;
On the staghounds that crouch in the caverns of shade,
And the bridegroom that plays with the fringe of his
plume,
And the guests that stand grouped at the foot of the
stair,

While I drink a blithe bridal to you, Lady Clare!

Your glance may be warm, and your lips may be
sweet,

But I'd rather be out where the doe makes her lair,
With my gun on my arm, and my dog at my feet,
Than stand at the altar with you, Lady Clare!
My heart you unleashed as your snood you unwound,
But I'll keep for a love-link one ringlet it bound.

I'll keep, for a love-link of days when I blessed

The breeze that your tresses had chased as it fanned,
The hawk on your glove, or the steed you caressed,
Or the greyhound that fawned at the touch of your
hand—

I'll keep for a love-link one lock of your hair,
And I'll drink a blithe bridal to you, Lady Clare!

I'll mind me no more how we wandered till night

Where the rowan tree rocks in the wild mountain air;
When your words fell as soft, and your foot fell as light
As a leaf that is loosed from the bough, Lady Clare!
And you smiled, and you wept, while we lingered alone,
As a flower keeps waving from shadow to sun.

Oh! dear were the love-words you whispered the while,
And your weeping, if sad, and your smiling, if gay!
Oh! false were your love-words, and false was your
smile,

And false are the vows you must utter to-day!
As a dame casts her hawk, I will rid me of care,
While I drink a blithe bridal to you, Lady Clare!

STORM AT TWILIGHT.

THE roar of a chafed lion in his lair
Begirt by levelled spears! A sudden flash,
Intense, yet wavering, like a beast's fierce eye
Searching the darkness. The wild bay of winds
Sweeps the burnt plains of heaven, and from afar,
Linked clouds are riding up like eager horsemen,
Javelin in hand. From the moth wings of twilight
There falls unwonted shadow, and strange gloom
Cloisters the unwilling stars. The sky is roofed
With tempest, and the moon's scant rays fall through
Like light let dimly through the fissured rock
Vaulting a cavern. To the horizon, .

The green sea of the forest has rolled back
Its levelled billows, and where mast-like trees
Sway to its bosom, here and there, a vine
Braced to some pine's bare shaft, clings, rocked aloft
Like a bold mariner ! There is no bough
But lifteth an appealing arm to heaven.
The scudding grass is shivering as it flies,
And herbs and flowers crouch to their mother earth
Like frightened children. 'Tis more terrible,
When the near thunder speaks, and the fleet wind
Stops like a steed that knows his rider's voice ;
For, oh, the hush that follows is the calm
Of a despairing heart, and, as a maniac
Loses his grief in raving, the mad storm,
Weeping fast tears, awakens with a sob
From its blank desolation, and shrieks on !

THE COLOURING OF HAPPINESS.

My heart is full of prayer and praise to-day,
So beautiful the whole world seems to me!
I know the morn has dawned as is its wont,
I know the breeze comes on no lighter wing,
I know the brook chimed yesterday that same
Melodious call to my unanswering thought;
But I look forth with new created eyes,
And soul and sense seem linked and thrill alike,
And things familiar have unusual grown,
Taking my spirit with a fair surprise!

But yesterday, and life seemed tented round
With idle sadness. Not a bird sang out
But with a mournful meaning; not a cloud,
And there were many, but in flitting past
Trailed somewhat of its darkness o'er my heart,
And loitering, half-becalmed, unfreighted all,
Went by the Heaven-bound hours.

But oh! to-day

Lie all harmonious and lovely things
Close to my spirit, and awhile it seems
As if the blue sky were enough of Heaven!
My thoughts are like tense chords that give their music
At a chance breath; a thousand delicate hands
Are harping on my soul! no sight, no sound
But stirs me to the keenest sense of pleasure—
Be it no more than the wind's cautious tread,
The swaying of a shadow, or a bough,
Or a dove's flight across the silent sky.

Oh, in this sunbright sabbath of the heart,
How many a prayer puts on the guise of thought,
An angel unconfessed! Its rapid feet,

That leave no print on memory's sands, tread not
Less surely their bright path than choral hymns
And litanies. I know the praise of worlds,
And the soul's unvoiced homage, both arise
Distinctly to His ear who holds all nature
Pavilioned by His presence ; who has fashioned
With an impartial care, alike the star
That keeps unpiloted its airy circle,
And the sun-quicken'd germ, or the poor moss
The building swallow plucks to line her nest.

THE PALACE OF ECHOES.

So tall the cloud-hung turrets rise,
They seem to pierce the secret skies,
And they who tread their heights declare
That angel forms are sentries there.

And rippling to the palace door,
A dull, deep wave flows evermore,
For they who pass, and they who come,
Must leap or swim those waters dumb.

Within the portals dark and grand,
Stands silence with uplifted hand,
And wakeful echoes, biding there,
Keep watch beside the palace stair.

Strange fancies paint the ceilings dim ;
A lamb, a stag, a lion grim,
Are by a blindfold maiden led,
Held in a chain of poppies red.

Above, through chambers vast and high
Tread lightly still, for echoes shy
Wheel fluttering at the rash footfall,
Like bird and bat from roof and wall.

There where the deep-browed windows rise,
The masquing light of noonday skies
Through many a stained and clouded pane
Drops in a faint prismatic rain.

Mantled and dumb, a ghostly rout
Wheels through the chambers, in and out;
Now in the cumbrous robes of sadness,
Now crowned, and flushed with festal madness.

Tread light above the sounding floors,
Along the dark, still corridors,
For they whose look is death, 'tis said,
Lie chained below in dungeons dread.

No daybeam breaks the purple gloom
That shrouds and fills yon inner room.
Dropt from the lintel to the floor,
Thick draperies cloak the low-arched door.

With veiled brows, a spectral band,
Within, a few pale masquers stand;
Echoes that haunt the palace halls
Beat with faint wings the outer walls.

Paler than stars that front the day,
One silver cresset wastes away ;
A marble naiad, fair and dim,
Keeps watch beside a fountain's brim.

THE BROWN MANTLE.

WRITE thee her history? why, dear friend, I weave
Always a new one. That of yesterday
To-day seems trite. Some varying of my mood,
Some chance-thrown light upon the picture caught,
Still makes me question if I read aright
The limner's meaning. I can only guess
That not in grief or guilt her soul is drawn
Through her raised eyes towards Heaven. Too ripe
a hue
Crimsons the passionate fulness of her lip;
The black profusion of her rippled hair
Caught backward from a cheek too rosy clear.

She hath been leaning o'er the saintly book
Her clasped hands rest upon, for one rich lock
Hath parted from the mass, across her brow
Pencilling its shadow. You would never guess
Her state from her arraying, at her throat
The sad-hued mantle with its falling hood
Close gathered. Best of all I love her eyes;
I'd have no change in them. I would not see
Even the angel presence of a smile
Troubling their darkness.

Was she good as fair?

How thinkest thou? are not her very looks
Teachers of purity? was she high-born?
Young, lovely, noble, did she give to God
The blossom of her nature? She hath dwelt
Where the Seine wanders. Canst thou image her
A peasant, loitering through the vintage fields,
Binding her brows with grape leaves; else, apart
Weaving fresh chaplets. For she hath been wont
To kneel at Romish altars, and I know
Under the brown folds of her cloak you'd find
Beads and a crucifix. Peasant or queen,

I'll think of her as one whose lightest word
Angels heard unrebuking; whose pure heart
Turned from impurity like a flower that shuts
At the approach of night.

Ah, be content!

I would not know her history if I could.

A SONG FOR AUTUMN.

FRIGHTEN the bird from the tasselled pine,

Where he sings like a hope in a gloomy breast ;
Tread down the blossoms that cling to the vine,

Winnow the blooms from the mountain's crest !
Let the balm-flower sleep where the small brooks twine,
And the golden-rod treasure the yellow sunshine.

Muffle the bells of the faint-lipped waves,

Let the red leaves fall. Let the brown fawn leap
Through the golden fern. In the weedy caves

Let the snake coil up for his winter sleep ;
Let the ringed-snake coil where the earth is drear,
Like a grief that grows cold as the heart grows sere !

Pluck down the rainbow; make steadfast the throne

Of the star that was faint in the summer night!

Let the white daughters of wave and sun

Weep as they cloister the pale, pale light.

Let the mist-wreaths brood o'er the valley-bound rills,

And the sky trail its mantle far over the hills.

Plunder the wrecks of the forest, and blind

The waters that picture its ruinous dome!

Wildly, oh, wildly, most sorrowful wind,

Chant, like a prophet, of terror to come!

Like a Niobe stricken with infinite dread,

Leave the spirit of beauty alone with her dead.

Throne the pale Naiad that filleth her urn

At the fount of the sun; on the curtain of night,

Paint wild Auroras like visions that burn,

Rosy Auroras like dreams of delight!

Mantle the earth, fold the robe o'er her breast,

While the sky, like a seraph, bends over her rest!

UNREST.

REST for awhile ! I'm tempest-tost to-day.
Bar out the sunshine. Let importunate life
Beating for ever with impatient hand
My soul's closed portals, only rouse within
Dull, dreamy echoes ! In a forest calm
Builds sleep, the white dove. As a bird she rides
The lulled waves of the soul. To-day, my thoughts
Hunt me like hounds ; the very prayer for peace
Scares peace away ; my senses, wide awake,
Watch for the touch that thrills them ; every sound
Falls through the listening air unscabbarded ;
And if sleep comes, 'tis but a transient dream

That flits betwixt me and the light of life,
Alighting never.

Oh, sweet chrism of God!

Oh, balm and oil by Heaven's white ministers
Laid with a blessing on the gates of sense!
Baptismal font from whence our bodies rise
Regenerate! cool, way-side shadow flung
Over the paths of toil! I am athirst,
Fevered and weary of my own worn self;
Strengthen me with thy strength!

Lo, where she stands,

Sleep, the beloved, and mocks me with her beauty!
Her hands lie clasped around a lamp alight
Burning faint incense; from her zone unbound
Dark folds trail silently; the poppies wreathed
Above her temples, bursting, over-ripe,
Drop with her motion. She is fair and calm,
And dreams, like cherubs, with bright restless wings
Cling to her sweeping robes. Let her draw near,
Laying her dewy lips upon my brow,
Twining me with soft movement in her arms,
And there shall pass a fluttering through my sense,

Leaf-like vibration, and my soul, as one
Who drifts out seaward, seeing the dim shore
Receding slow, hearing the voice of waves
Call to him fainter, shall float guideless on,
Rocked into slumber; dream effacing dream,
Thought widening around thought, till all grows vague.

A WINTER NIGHT'S THOUGHT.

HARK to the wind! The snow falls fast to-night.
By morn, all down the road-sides 'twill lie blown
In beautiful shapes and curves. Against the panes
It has lodged heavily.

How many suns
Since last, at dawn, I heard the gay south-west
Come piping up the vales, one little cloud
Borne on its bosom as a shepherd bears
The youngling of the flock?

From out this mad
Contending of blent voices, Fancy calls
Shapes of a ruder mould. To-night, believe,

Some wild-eyed maniac, with uncertain steps,
Paces these barren hill-sides. Now, her cry
Comes stifled from the hollows. Now, she shrieks
On the bare rising ground, while high-pitched tones
Make answer, far and shrill, as if the fiends,
Mocking her sense, grew audible to us ;
And now—Heaven guard us !—her approaching steps
Sound close beneath the walls, while, each in turn,
The barred doors shake as if some skeleton hand
Rattled against the locks, the windows thrill ;
So human grows the moaning voice without,
That, glancing sidelong where the curtains part,
One looks to see some blood-forsaken face
Pressed to the pane. Anon blank silence falls,
And you believe this wandering thing stands still,
Held by a thread of reason ; till, far off,
Along the dells there runs an undertone
Of low, melodious laughter, like soft keys
Linked by a flying hand, and forest pines,
Crossed by the harsh chords of the bare, brown boughs,
Prelude their stormy music with a thrill
Like that deep trembling when the organ first

Stirs in a vast cathedral. Oh then, roused,
Struck by some ambushed thought, she shrieks again
Sudden and sharp, this tenant of the night!
And hurries through the storm with broken cries,
Or, crouching to the walls, finds shelter there,
Or, in a sore dismay, upon the earth
Dashed headlong, sobs complaining, or in vain
Seeks refuge for her madness and her woe
In the white crumbling sepulchres she treads!

COUNT JULIO.

MID halls beneath whose fretted cornices
Echo still babbles of a glorious past,
Dwelt Julio the miser.

Nobly born,
Reared among palaces, and trained from youth
To the gay vices of a liberal age,
How came it now that year by year sped on
To leave the proud count in his silent halls
Hoarding the gold once lavished ?

Young and fair,
The haughtiest noble of the Roman court,
The stateliest of the high-born throng that graced
.

Its princely revels, he had left the feast,
Bidding the bright wine that he quaffed in parting
Be to him thence accursed. Never more
Checked he his courser by the Tiber's banks,
Nor struck the sweet chords of his lute, nor trod
Glad measures with the bright-lipped Roman dames.
And from the lintels of his banquet hall
The spider balanced on her gossamer thread;
Dust heaped the silken couches; and where swept
Golden fringed curtains to the chequered floor,
The rat gnawed silently, and gray moths fed
On the rich produce of the Indian loom.
Men shunned his threshold, and his palace doors
Creaked on their rusty hinges. Prince and peasant
Alike turned coldly at his coming step.
The very beggar that at noontide lay
Basking 'neath sunlight in the quiet street,
Stretched not his hand forth as the miser passed.

He cared not for their scorn; man's breath to him
Was as the wind that sweeps a blasted oak
And finds no leaf to flutter. Fate had left

Only two things on earth for him to love—
The gold he heaped, and the fair motherless child
Who, by his side, grew up to womanhood—
And these he worshipped, loathing all things else.
His couch was meager as a cloistered monk's;
Bianca's head was pillowed upon down;
His fare was scanty, and his garments coarse,
But she was clad like princes, and her board
Heaped with the costliest viands. From the world
He shrank abhorrent, but Bianca shone
Proudest and fairest in a brilliant court.
Her youth had been most lonely. At his side
To watch the piling of the golden heaps
He told so greedily; to play alone
In gardens where no hand had put aside
The flowers and weeds that in one tangled woof
Hung o'er the fountain's dusty bed, and crept
Round the tall porticoes: perchance to sit
Hour after hour all silent at his feet,
Twining her small arms and her baby throat
With the rare treasures that his caskets held;
Rubies, and pearls, and flashing carcanets,

Her costly playthings; all companionless,
These were her childish pastimes. Years wore on,
Till the close dawn of perfect womanhood
Flushed in her cheek and brightened in her eye.
And the girl learned to know how fair the face
Those dingy walls had cloistered from the sun;
To bear her head more proudly, and to step,
If not so lightly, with a queenlier tread.
Love-songs were framed for her, her midnight sleep
Was broken by the sound of silver lutes,
And the young gallants caracoled their steeds
Gayly, at eve, beneath her balcony.

She went forth to the world, and careless lips
Told her the shame that was her heritage.
And scornful fingers pointed, as she passed,
To the rare jewels, and the broidered robes,
That decked the miser's daughter. Envious tongues
Gilded anew the half-forgotten tale,
And it became the marvel of all Rome.
Thus till the diadem of gems and gold
Burned on her white brow like a circling flame,

And she went writhing home, to weep, to loathe
The sordid parent who had brought this blight
Upon the joyous promise of her youth.
It was the still noon of a summer night,
When the young countess from her father's roof
Fled, with a noble of the Roman court!
Morn came, and through the empty corridors,
The balconies, the gardens, the wide halls,
In vain they sought her. Noon passed by, and then
The truth was guessed, not spoken. Silently
Count Julio trod the marble staircases,
And pausing by the door that once was hers,
Stood a brief moment, and then, pressing on,
Stepped through the quiet chamber. All was still,
Bearing no traces of her recent flight.
Here lay a slipper, here a silken robe,
And here a lute thrown down, with a white glove
Flung carelessly beside it. Still the air
Breathed of the delicate perfumes she had loved!

He glanced but once around the silent room,
Then from the mirrored and silk-draped walls

Cast his eye downward o'er his shrunk form,
His meager garments. Few the words he spake,
And muttered low; but in them came a curse
So blasphemous, so hideous in its depth
Of impotent rage, that they who at his side
Yet stood in lingering pity, with blanched lips
Turned to the threshold, and crept shuddering forth.

He breathed his sorrow to no human ear,
But left it charnelled in his heart, to breed
Corruption there. None knew how wearily
The hours passed on beneath those lonely walls;
None saw him when, by midnight still a watcher,
Starting and trembling as, inconstantly,
The night winds swayed the curtains to and fro;
Fancying the rustle of her silken robe,
Her footfall on the staircase! Time sped on,
To strike the dulled bloom from his cheek, and scare
The soul that once had queened it on his brow:
A bent and worn old man, upon whose breast
Hung the neglected masses of his beard,
With meager hands habitually clenched,

Till the sharp nails wore furrows in the palms.
Thus stole he forth at even, and, with eyes
Lost in the golden future of his dreams,
Sped through the busy crowd, unmarked, unheeding.

Once had he looked upon Bianca's face—
Once had she knelt before him, with her child
Gasping upon her breast, and prayed for succour.
The unwept victim of a drunken brawl
Her lord had fallen, and the palace halls
That owned her mistress, were deserted now.
She had braved fear and hunger, till her child
Wailed dying on her bosom; and so urged,
Pride, shame, forgotten in a mother's love,
Clung to his knees for pardon. But in vain.
He cursed her as she knelt, bade her go forth,
And 'mid the loathsome suppliants that unveil
Disease and suffering to the eye of wealth,
Bare, too, her anguish to the glance of pity.
Then as she lingered, spurned her from his feet
With words that chilled her agony to dread,
And drove her thence in horror.

From that day

From that day

His very blood seemed charged with bitterness.
Miser and usurer both, upon the wrecks
Of others' happiness he built his own.
His name became accursed in the land,
And with his withering soul his body grew
Scarce human in its ghastly hideousness.

The bulb enshrouds the lily, and within
The most unsightly form may folded lie
The white wings of an angel. But in him
Seemed all the sweet humanities of life
Coldly encharnelled, and no hand divine
Rolled from his breast the weary weight of sin,
To bid them go forth unto suffering man
Like gracious ministers.

And she, alas!

Whom he had madly driven forth to ruin?
Earth hath no words to tell how dark the change
That clothed her fallen spirit. O'er the waste
Of want and ruin that engulfed her fortunes,
She had sent forth the white dove, purity,

And it returned no more. The Roman dames
Took not her name upon their scornful lips.
Her form became a model for the artist,
And her rare face went down to future ages
Limned on his canvass. Ye may mark it yet
In the long galleries of the Vatican,
Varied, yet still the same. Now robed in pride,
As monarchs in their garb of Tyrian purple;
Now with a Magdalen's blue mantle drawn
Over the bending forehead. As the marble
Sleeps in unsullied whiteness on the tomb,
Taking no taint from the foul thing it covers,
Her beauty bore no blight from guilt, but lived
A monument that made her name immortal.

Night had uprisen, clothed with storms and gloom.
No taper lit the solitary hall,
But to and fro with feeble steps its lord
Paced through the darkness. Midnight came, and then
Pausing beside the groaning door that weighed
Its rusty hinge, Count Julio, crouching, peered
Into the gloom without; for stealthy feet

Whose echo struck upon his wary ear,
Had crossed the lower hall, and slowly now
Trod the great staircase.

'Twas no robber's step,
Faint, slow, and halting ever and anon
As though in weariness. His sharpened sense
Caught, 'mid the fitful pauses of the wind,
The headlong dashing of the driven rain,
A sound of painful breathing, nay, of sobs,
Bursting, and then as suddenly suppressed.

Shuddering he stood, and, as the storm's red bolt
Leapt through the windows, lighting, as it passed,
A dusky shape that cowered at the flash,
He shrank within the chamber, and again
Listened in silence.

Nearer came the sound,—
A tall form crossed the threshold, and threw back
What seemed a heavy mantle. Then again
Glanced the pale lightning, and Count Julio knew,
By the long hair that swept her garments' hem,
Bianca!

They who through that night of fear
Kept watch with storm and terror till the morn,
Bore its dark memories even to the tomb.
For shrieks and cries seemed mingled with the wind,
And voices, as of warring fiends, prevailed
O'er its low mutterings!

Morn awoke at last,
And with its earliest gleam Count Julio crept
Forth through his palace gardens. Swollen drops
Hung on the curved roofs of the porticoes;
His footsteps dashed them from the earth-bowed leaves,
And the long tangles of the matted grass.
But, over head, the day broke gloriously.

Where once a fountain to the sunlight leapt,
A marble Naiad by its weedy bed
Stood on her pedestal. With hand outstretched
She grasped a hollowed shell, now brimming o'er,
While a green vine that round her arm had crept,
Rose, serpent-like, and in the chalice dipt
Its curling tendrils. Thither turned his eye,
Just as the red uprising of the sun

Smote the pale statue, and crept brightening down
Even to its mossy base. Mantled and prone,
A heap that scarcely seemed a human form
Crouched in the shadow, and with tottering feet
The old man hurried onward. Motionless,
It stirred not at his coming. Nearer still
He marked a white face upward turned, clenched hands
Locked in the hair that swept its ghastly brow.
Shading his weak eyes from the blinding sun,
Cowering in trembling horror to the earth,
Still on he crept, then, bending softly down,
Spoke in a smothered voice, "Hist, hist, Bianca!"

Oh, mockery! the ear that he had filled
With curses, woke not to the tones of love!
The breast that he had spurned from him, heaved not
At his wild anguish. Death had done its work.
The tempest had been merciless as the parent
Who drove her forth to meet it, and the flash
Of its red eye more withering than his scorn.
Shunned both in penitence and guilt, forsaken
By those who only prized her for the beauty

Time, and perchance remorse, had touched with blight,
Drenched by the rain, all breathless with the storm,
Homeless and hopeless, she had crept to him
Once more a suppliant, and, spurned rudely forth,
Here had lain down despairing, and so perished.

DAME MARGARET.

WITH mettled steed, and hawk on hand,
Gay ride ye forth at morn's arise,
While light with shade, as dreams with sleep,
Strives battling o'er the skies.
Fair floats your plume athwart the breeze,
And, loosed from band and golden net,
Your ringlets chase the summer wind,
Dame Margaret!

Your steed stands checked within the gate,
With upreared hoofs, and crest of pride;
Your coupled hounds bay down in ire
The echoes as they chide;

The page holds slack the silken leash,
The steed that checks his light curvette
Bears hotly on the golden bit,
Dame Margaret!

Ride forth, nor read the heart would lose
Life, sense, and soul, all these save love,
To be the breeze your ringlets kiss,
The hawk upon your glove;
Ride forth your bonny earl beside,
Nor deign to think how once ye met
At morning's blush a lowlier love,
Dame Margaret!

FOREST SCENE.

I KNOW a forest vast and old,
A shade so deep, so darkly green,
That morning sends her shaft of gold
In vain to pierce its leafy screen.
I know a brake where sleeps the fawn,
The soft-eyed fawn, through noon's repose,
For noon with all the calm of dawn
Lies hushed beneath those dewy boughs.

Oh! proudly there the forest kings
Their banners lift on vale and mount;
And cool and fresh the wild grass springs
By lonely path, by sylvan fount;

There o'er the fair leaf-laden rill

The laurel sheds its clustered bloom,
And throned upon the rock-wreathed hill,
The rowan waves his scarlet plume.

No huntsman's call, no baying hound,

Scares from his rest the light-limbed stag,
But following faint his airy bound

Glad echo leaps from crag to crag;
From morn till eve the wood-birds sing,

And, by the wild wave's glittering play,
The pheasant plumes her glossy wing,
The doe lies couched at close of day.

From slippery ledge, from moss-grown rock,

Dash the swift waters at a bound,
And from the foam that veils the shock
Floats every wavelet sparkle-crowned.

By brake, and dell, and lawny glade,
O'er gnarled root, o'er mossy stone,
Beneath the forest's emerald shade

The brook winds murmuring, chiding on.

Far floating o'er its limpid breast
The lily sends her petals fair,
And couched beside her regal crest
The balm-flower scents the drowsy air.
From spray and vine, o'er rocky ledge
Hang blossoms wild of scarlet dye,
And on the curved and sanded edge
The pink-lined shells, wave-polished, lie.

There wakes no tone of idle mirth
Amid those shadows vast and dim,
But from the gentle lips of earth,
How soft and low her forest hymn !
How soft and low where stirs the wind
Through the dark arches of the wood,
Where, mass on mass, the boughs entwined,
Hang whispering o'er the chiming flood !

When twilight skies look faintly down,
When noon lies hushed on leaf and spray,
When midnight casts her silver crown
Before the throne of god-like day,

There still to earth's perpetual choir

The same sweet harmony is given :

For angels wake her sacred lyre,

And every chord is strung by Heaven.

TWILIGHT.

WITH one large planet, like a chalice prest
In her twin shadowy hands, comes Twilight, slow,
Advancing with dropt eyes, and bending low
Where day reclining pillows on the West,
Laves his worn feet with tears, and with her hair
Mantles their whiteness; while arising faint
As the thought-prayer of some exhausted saint,
Throng the fresh evening perfumes through the air
And when the night with trailing steps draws nigh,
Sealing the Orient with its cumbrous gloom,
Muffling her brow with darkness, sits she then,

Till, when the dawn keeps angel ward on high,
Behold her kneeling at the vacant tomb,
Clad in the dark blue of a Magdalen!

THE SEASONS.

SPRING is the sweet soul of the shrouded year;
Psyche, the butterfly, with painted wings,
Forth issuing from the stony lips of death.

Summer's a queen, that to the sun's pavilion
Comes with rich gifts and odours, and a train
Of rainbow-girdled showers, like eastern almas,
With tinkling feet all musical with soft bells.

Autumn's a stag, that, hunted through the hills
By the keen hound-like winds, flies, dropping blood,
Or stands at bay in the full pride of beauty.

And Winter minds me of some lone, wild bird,
That, wandering from the Arctic, makes its nest

In solitary fens, seeking for food
The red marsh berry, and the mailèd buds
Of the young, tender branches; or, athirst,
Driving its sharp bill through the polished ice
Into the wave below. It hath no song,
Only a few weird notes; and when the sun
Melts into lucid pools the snow that lies
In the rock crevices, it will go north
With the white water-fowl, that trooping fly,
In ranked battalions, through the gates of March.

THE LOVE QUARREL.

NAY, I'm sure you've not forgotten, though you fain
would have it so;

I know you've not forgotten: shall I tell you why I
know?

For all Maud lingers at your side, and Blanche is
bending low,

To listen to your whispers, till her breath is on your
brow,

For all you smile when Lilia smiles, your smiling
mocks at glee,

And by that token, I believe, you're thinking now
of me.

As you lie there in the shadow, with the sunlight on
your hair,
With the misty floating curtains looped around you
drooping fair,
The velvet sinking to your limbs, the only murmur
near,
The music of a woman's voice, low-tuned to meet your
ear,
You're thinking how, one summer noon, when summer
suns were warm,
I watched beside your half-repose, and your head lay
on my arm.

Then I sang you quaint love-ballads, sang you rhymed
and measured words,
But your own were ever sweeter, and the singing of
the birds
From the garden chimed in softly, but I thought your
voice was best,
And wished the ballad ended, and the little birds at
rest,

So I might hear you speak again. You're thinking of
it still—

Let Blanche's golden tresses sweep your forehead at
their will!

And how we jested softly, while your breath upon my
brow

Fell warmer than another's kiss; and your lightest
word sank low,

Low through the full tides of my soul, as a jewel that
is thrown

'Mid the waters, still lies hoarded when the ripple is
all gone.

Without, a willow trailed its wands along the mossy
eaves,

And your heart was full of love-words as the tree was
full of leaves.

The leaves are fallen from the tree to bud i' the April
rain,

And your lips are very silent now, but their music
comes again,

And we'll marvel in our summer love, why thus with
cold delay

We kept the sunshine from our lips when our hearts
were warm as May.

Yet give your pride free rein the while, all wilful
though it be,

For I'd rather ten times bend to you than you should
bend to me.

Though Maud still kneels beside you, with her white
hands glancing where

The cushion's silken tassels swing beneath your floating
hair,

And though Blanche is bending lower, while with
smiling, upturned eyes

You have wooed her head still nearer by your indistinct
replies,

I can look the while securely, I can smile the while
to know

That you have not yet forgotten, though you fain
would make it so.

REST.

FRESH from the tents, a soul, bright-mailed,
 Stood numbered in the ranks of life,
But with the first rude tumult failed
 And fled, a reereant, from the strife.
Then sad, ashamed, and desolate,
Put off her armour's heavy weight,
And wandering, elad in hermit guise,
 Through paths waylaid by ghastly fears,
Implored, with wet, uplifted eyes,
 A gift that's won by blood not tears,
Till with her own grief coldly blent,
Rose other words, austere sent
To chide her graceless discontent.
"Truee to thy clamour, vain and fond,
Rest is not here, it lies beyond."

Beyond? where noontide shadows stand
Under the boughs, deep down the vales?
Where silence lifts a calming hand
O'er leaf that stirs, and cloud that sails?
With earnest eyes, but looks resigned,
She wanders now and thinks to find
Within some green, leaf-shaded glen,
God's open page beside her shining,
Noon, like a blue-robed Magdalen,
Close to the wooded wave reclining.
With hopes that took the garb of fear,
Her watch she kept, and noon drew near;
Then said that strange voice, cold and clear,
"Truce to thy hoping, vain and fond,
Rest is not here, it lies beyond."

Ah me, poor soul! not yet she droops,
With hands meek crossed, and mournful eyes,
Till eve lets loose her shadowy troops,
Till night's black turrets paint the skies,
While weary hours seem weary years,
She counts the time by falling tears.

At even there came a cold wind, sent
To drift her poor hopes, crushed and sere.
And on night's cloudy battlement
There stalked, oh God, what spectral Fear!
When the last shadow, dim and gray,
Sank hovering to the brow of day,
She heard that strange voice, pitying, say,
"Truce to thy lingering, vain and fond,
Rest is not here, it lies beyond."

DECEMBER.

Now through the distant vales the fawn's light foot
Leaveth its cloven impress on the snow ;
The wood's soft echoes mock the baying hound ;
The hunter builds his watch-fire on the hills ;
The school-boy, from his morning task released,
Shoulders the rifle, and goes blithely forth
To start the dusky pheasant from her nest,
Down in the ferny hollows. All day long
There is a sound of muffled hoofs, half drowned
By the quick sleigh-bell that rejoicingly
Rings in the new-born monarch. All day long,
The woodsman plies his sharp and sudden axe
Under the crashing branches.

Vale and mead,
And steadfast wave lie stretched beneath my eye,
Clad in one uniform livery. O'er the lake
The skaters flit like shadows, and afar
The wagoner plods beside his smoking team ;
The sportsman, followed by his frolic hound,
Springs up the breezy hill-side. Save for these,
All breathing life alike seems motionless.

A POET'S LOVE.

THE stag leaps free in the forest's heart,
But thy step is lighter, my love, my bride !
Light as the quick-footed breezes that part
The plummy ferns on the mountain's side ;
Swift as the zephyrs that come and pass
O'er the waveless lake, and the billowy grass.
I hear thy voice where the white wave gleams,
In the one-toned bells of the rippled streams,
In the silvery boughs of the aspen tree,
In the wind that stirreth the shadowy pine,
In the shell that moans for the distant sea,
Never was voice so sweet as thine !

Never a sound through the even dim
Came half so soft as thy vesper hymn.

I have followed fast, from the lark's low nest,
Thy breezy step to the mountain crest.
The livelong day I have wandered on,
Till the stars were up, and the twilight gone,
Ever unwearied where thou hast roved,
Fairest, and purest, and best beloved!

I have felt thy kiss in the leafy aisle,
And thy breath astir in my floating hair;
I have met the light of thy haunting smile
In the deep still woods, and the sunny air;
For thou lookest down from the bending skies,
And the earth is glad with thy laughing eyes.

When my heart is sad, and my pulse beats low,
Whose touch so light on my aching brow?
Who cometh in dreams to my midnight sleep?
Who bendeth over my noonday rest?
Who singeth me songs in the forest deep,
Laying my head to her gentle breast?

When life grows dim to my weary eye,
When joy departeth, and sorrow is nigh,
Who, 'neath the track of the stars, save thee,
Speaketh or singeth of hope to me?

There comes a time when the morn shall rise,
Yet charm no smile to thy film'd eyes.
There comes a time when thou liest low
With the roses dead on thy frozen brow,
With a pall hung over thy tranc'd rest,
And the pulse asleep in thy silent breast.
There shall come a dirge through the valleys drear,
And a white-robed priest to thine icy bier.
His lips are cold, but his dim eyes weep,
And he maketh thy grave where the snow falls deep.
Woe is me, when I watch and pray

For the lightest sound of thy coming foot,
For the softest note of thy summer lay,

For the faintest chord of thy vine-strung lute!
Woe is me, when the storms sweep by,
And the mocking winds are my sole reply!

ALINE'S CHOICE.

RUDOLPH is a baron,

He dreams till noon on a pillow fine;
From the dusk of eve to the dusk of dawn,
Drinking deep of the amber wine.

But Ludovic, the peasant,

Lies like a deer in the dewy brake;
With his broad palm for a drinking cup,
Stoops to a breezy lake.

Rudolph rides to the knightly chase

With hawk, and pack, and a mounted train;
Ludovic, with a single hound,
Wanders afoot o'er the windy plain.

The one will rest in a silken tent

When the quarry has dropped, and the mort is played,
The other lies in a cleft of rock
Under a hemlock's shade.

Rudolph will give me a palfrey white,

With silken saddle, and stirrup of gold,
Ludovic in his arms of steel

Has borne me far through the heat and cold.
The noble has promised a chain of gems,
Brodered kerchief, and mantle gay;
The peasant will shear me a fleece to spin
A gown for my wedding day.

What should I do with jewels

On my neck that is brown with the sun and rain?
How should I fasten my long, loose hair

With a comb of pearl, or a golden chain?
I'll crown it fair with a myrtle wreath,
I'll gather it back with a riband gay,
And I'll wrap myself in my peasant's cloak
To keep the cold away.

I hold my breath in yon lone old halls ;
 Echoes that lurk in the niches there
Say over my words with a hollow laugh,
 Stealthily follow from stair to stair ;
Knights and dames on the pictured wall,
 Look, as I pass, with a steadfast frown,
And the mastiff that's chained in the castle court
 Barks at my peasant gown.

I know a roof where the wild grass hangs
 From the moss and mould to the cabin door ;
I know a hound that will crouch and fawn
 At the sound of my step on the rush-strewn floor !
Keep your gifts, oh Rudolph,
 The chain of pearls, and the golden band,
To match the pride of a fairer neck,
 To shine on a whiter hand.

FROST PICTURES.

WHEN, like a sullen exile driven forth,
Southward, December drags his icy chain,
He graves fair pictures of his native North
On the crisp window pane.

So some pale captive blurs, with lips unshorn,
The latticed glass, and shapes rude outlines there,
With listless finger, and a look forlorn,
Cheating his dull despair.

The fairy fragments of some Arctic scene,
I see to-night; blank wastes of Polar snow,
Ice-laden boughs, and feathery pines that lean
Over ravines below.

Black, frozen lakes, and icy peaks blown bare,
Break the white surface of the crusted pane,
And spear-like leaves, long ferns, and blossoms fair,
Linked in a silvery chain.

Draw me, I pray thee, by this slender thread,
Fancy, thou sorceress, bending, vision-wrought,
O'er that dim well, perpetually fed
By the clear springs of thought!

Northward I turn, and tread those dreary strands,
Lakes where the wild-fowl breed, the swan abides;
Shores where the white fox, burrowing in the sands,
Harks to the droning tides.

And seas where, drifting on a raft of ice,
The she-bear rears her young; and cliffs so high,
The dark-winged birds that emulate their rise
Melt through the pale blue sky.

There, all night long, with far-diverging rays
And stalking shades, the red Auroras glow;
From the keen heaven, mock suns with pallid blaze
Light up the Arctic snow.

Guide me, I pray, along those waves remote,
That deep unstartled from its primal rest;
Some errant sail, the fisher's lone, light boat,
Borne waif-like o'er its breast!

Lead me, I pray, where never shallop's keel
Brake the dull ripples throbbing to their caves;
Where the mailed glacier with his arm'd heel
Spurs the resisting waves!

Paint me, I pray, the phantom hosts that hold
Celestial tourneys when the midnight calls,
On airy steeds, with lances bright and bold,
Storming her ancient halls !

Yet, while I look, the magic picture fades,
Melts the bright tracery from the frosted pane ;
Trees, vales, and cliffs, in sparkling snows arrayed,
Dissolve in silvery rain.

Without, the day's pale glories sink and swell
Over the black rise of yon wooded height ;
The moon's thin crescent, like a stranded shell
Left on the shores of night.

Hark how the north wind, with a hasty hand
Rattling my casement, frames his mystic rhyme ;
House thee, rude minstrel, chanting through the land
Runes of the olden time !

FROM A TRUE WIFE TO ONE OVER BOLDE.

BE not amazed that scornfulle I reprove

The boldnesse did my modestie misprize,
Nor thinke it strange that gentle seeminge lippes
Should arm their softnesse with a sterne disguise.

Roses may harbour bees, and serpents wilde

Under sweet summer's flowerie zone abide,
And shame-faced Love wears, hooded at her will,
On her fayre wriste the brighte-eyed merlin, pride.

As reedes bende lowe before a cominge storme,

Well mote your boldnesse shrinke before my frowne;
Well my disdaynful glance mote quelle your owne,
As hawkes do strike the coward quarrie downe.

Yet holde me not of temper cold and strange,
That so I keepe my matron armour brighte ;
If my deare Lorde had claymed his lawfulle due,
How readie were these lippes to yelde his righte !

LINES WRITTEN FOR A PICTURE.

SING me to-night some gay refrain,

Sweet rhymes that ring out peals of gladness,
Nor let thy jesting lips profane
Even the name of sadness.

Put from thine eye its vague unrest,

And chide the darkness from thy brow,
That we, who met with smile and jest,
May part as lightly now.

We've scoffed at love, we've laughed at faith,

(Ah, woe the while for you and me !)

No pledge that's breathed by human breath
Were pledge to such as we.

Oh, we've trifled away the sweetest dreams
Ever let loose from the courts above,
And linked our jests to the noblest themes
God and the angels love!

Shame me no more with mimic sighs—
Poor cheat of love! poor mock of woe!
But show me in thy lifted eyes
The scorn I look thee now.

INCONSTANCY.

THEY told me he'd forsake me; that the words
With which he charmed my very soul away,
Were like the hollow music of a shell
That learns to mock the ocean's deeper voice.
For he had listened to love's tones until
His ear and lip, though not his heart, had grown
Familiar with their melody. Nay, more,
They said his very boyhood had been marked
By worse than a boy's follies, that in youth,
The season of high hopes, when lesser men
Put on their manhood as a monarch's heir
Rich robes and royalty, his poor ambition
Asked but new charms and pleasures, newer loves,

New lips to smile until their sweetness palled,
And softer hands to clasp his own, until
He wearied even of so light a fetter.
Thus did they pluck me from him, but in vain;
For when did warning stay a woman's heart?
I *knew* all this, and yet I trusted him.
Yea, with a child's blind faith I gave my fate
Into his hands, content that he should know
How absolute his power and my weakness.
Speak not of pride, *I* never felt its lash;
There is no place for fallen Lucifer
In the pure heaven of a sinless love;
And when he left me, as they said he would,
My spirit had no room for aught save grief:
Giving the lie to my own conscious heart,
I taxed stern truth with falsehood to the last.
But when to doubt was madness, when, perforce,
Even from my credulous eyes the scales had fallen,
What was the cold scorn of a thousand worlds
To the one thought that for a counterfeit
I'd staked my woman's all of love—and *lost*!

THE WINGED HORSEMAN.

Down the green distance of cathedral woods,
Methought a youth sat mounted for a journey,
Reining a steed within whose cloudy eyes
Slumber and flame contended. I could see
How sullenly he hung upon the bit,
And trod all greenness from the place beneath
With ponderous, restless hoofs. Light sat the rider,
As one who feels his strength.

The early dawn
Lit the pale semblance of an angel's glory
Over his brow. Nor sword nor shield bare he.
Many I saw on fretting, fiery steeds,

Some armoured, and some masked, but few, like him,
Winged with soft plumes. His right hand grasped a
wand,

That, like a prism, showed the plain white light
A mine of jewels. Pendent from his neck,
Hung to his breast a mirror clear, wherein
All life made pictures. Else those mystical shapes
That walk as ghosts the troubled house of sleep,
Or the unhallowed breath of that dark steed,
Dimmed it awhile. His eyes were full of thought,
Deep and dream-haunted, but their upward glance
Was like the free sweep of an eagle's wing.

He rode forth on his journey, the black steed
Moving with cumbrous pace, save when, incensed
By the firm curb, he tried his master's strength,
And with wide fiery eyes and trembling nostrils
Reared and leapt forward. As the noon drew near,
The rider's arm grew weary of restraining,
And many passed by with reins flying loose,
Urging him on. Some laughed aloud for scorn,
To see him play the laggard. But ofttimes

Bright forms came shaping through the dim blue air,
And voices spake to him they wist not of,
And while he looked and listened, the black steed
Lay down and slumbered.

Farther on, I saw
A river with alternate light and shade,
Ringed like a serpent. Some of those who passed,
Waked only by the cold lap of its waves,
Slept on their flying coursers.

Woven leaves
Replaced the halo. Those afar, beheld
The air all rainbowed o'er the youth. A veil
Betwixt his vision and the outer world
Lay like a vapour that, dissolving, spreads
Into wild phantoms, as the mists of sleep
Wreathe into those strange shapes that men call dreams.

Methought they paused upon the river bank,
Rider and horse. The steed, with planted hoofs,
Stood resolute, and once the rider reeled
As giddy with the flowing of the waves,
And once he turned, with lingering, loving looks

Sped to the land whose lengthened shadows fell
Deep on the waters. All his laurels dropped
Upon the shore he left. His bright wand lay
Adrift upon the river. The black steed
Swam in its wake, and with his rein left loose
Played the swift ripples; and they drew a veil
Over his sight, and sang into his ears
Where the contending strains of heaven and earth
Met and made discord. When I looked again,
Lo, the pale rider, who with outstretched arms,
Trod the fast-sliding currents, till ashore
Plucked by extended hands! Thenceforth I saw
Only the glorified outlines of a form
Cast on the waters brokenly. Beyond,
In my faint soul excessive light made darkness.

TWO CHANTS.

“TE DEUM LAUDAMUS!” through green river meadows,
Where noon, pacing slow, holds in leash the fleet shadows,
Blown like a cloud from St. Agatha’s altar,
Drifts down the south wind the loud chanted psalter;
Under the light of the tapers lies sleeping
One whose fair soul was not whitened by weeping.

Sorrow stood far from her—love, in mute reverence,
Knelt to the shrine of her starry intelligence—
Charmed by her music of being, dull cavil
Lay coiled in her presence; and lion-like evil,
Lying in wait for her soul frail and tender,
Crouched at the blaze of its virginal splendour.

Over her calm face a radiance immortal
Flows from the smile at her mouth's silent portal—
They who kneel round her from matins till even,
As they kneel at the tombs of the blessed in Heaven,
Think not to question that presence resplendent
Where fled the soul that is shining ascendant.

Down from the gray clouds the March winds are swooping,
Out of the low soil pale phantoms are trooping;
Lift on the wings of St. Agatha's choir
The great "De Profundis" rolls solemnly higher—
Under the light of the tapers is lying
One whom keen anguish made ready for dying.

Sorrow, that writes with the pen of an angel
God's burning thoughts through her mystic evangel;
Passion, that, laden with memories tender,
Crowns himself king with their tropical splendour;
Weeping repentance with hands lifted palely—
These were the spirits that walked with her daily.

Death, creeping near while she knelt in devotion,
Froze on her features their mournful emotion.

They, who reluctant draw nearer to falter
"Ave" or vow at the steps of the altar,
Marking it thence, ask, in fear, if the sorrow
Lying slain on her lips will not quicken to-morrow?

A F R A G M E N T.

FAITH is seraph born,
And mindful of her origin, most wise,
For she has listened at the feet of Christ ;
Calm-hearted as an angel, for she keeps
The trustfulness of childhood, as a sabbath
Keeps the dawn's stillness.

At her shining feet,
Ah, then, be mute and listen, while she tells
The chastened spirit what its pride of strength
In vain petitions. All her words are pleasant
As shadows by the way-side, and we bear
Their memory with us as we pluck a branch

From some green sheltering tree. And, through them
fall,
Like light through leaves, faint glimpses of a glory
Yet unrevealed; some rays of that far sun
That sends its shining to our distant hearts;
Gleams of the time when man, that grand conception
Unworthily embodied, shall stand forth
As God pronounced him first, ere, like an echo,
Through each reverberating age, he grew
With repetition feebler and unlike
The great original.

LINES.

UP, up, thou sluggard, ere the noon reposing!

Don thy bright armour—breast-plate, casque, and spear;
Thou that went forth so glad to meet the morning,
Tarriest thou here?

Oh, go thy way! steep winds the path before me;

There mourns the cypress, there pale willows nod,
Standing for waymarks o'er their graves, who, toiling,
Fell as they trod.

Too early didst thou call me from my slumber,

From my sweet morning rest, and I am fain,
Unduly tasked, to dream away unheeded
Fever and pain.

Hear'st thou their songs who rock and rift surmounting
Shout to their brethren in the vales beneath?
Seest thou the foremost on his spear point lifting
Trophy and wreath?

I hear sharp cries, a sound, of stifled moaning
Blent with brave music, and a din of strife,
Discordant tones to dove-eyed peace, proclaiming
War to the knife.

I see coiled adders, by the roadside lurking,
Watch for the failing step, the foot astray,
While overhead the keen-eyed eagles circling
Wait for their prey.

Look right nor left; stand firm, and dauntless meeting
Death by the open stroke, the secret spring,
Gathering thy proud fame as a robe around thee,
Fall like a king!

Oh hence, I pray! my soul, athirst for slumber,
Close to her fount lies fainting on the brim;
Hears the sweet trilling of her waves, grass-muffled,
Low-toned and dim.

Let the old yews beside my pillow standing

Spread wide their arms, surround me with their gloom ;
And let the few pale blooms that I have gathered
Fade on my tomb.

Not so, not so ! unsheath a trenchant purpose,

Press on with firm lip and uplifted eye,
And hew out even from the rocks that daunt thee
A fair white effigy.

GUENDOLEN.

OLD Ralph, the gray-haired serving man,
Is nodding asleep by his pipe and can ;
And Ursula, where the firelight falls,
Tossing the shadows about the walls,
Hears a death-watch tick in the beams above her,
Keeping time to a tune she is thinking over.
A bird within a silver ring
 Sits swinging softly to and fro,
Shading his eyes with a crimson wing;
 Across the rafters all a-glow
 His shadow flits with a motion slow.

Carven goblets from the wall
Cast red flecks about the floor;
From over window and bolted door
Antlers vast fling round the hall
Shadowy arms that rise and fall
Whenever the flames spring up to make
The fresh-heaped fagots curl and break.
The hound sleeps fast on the warm hearth stone,
And, with dropt ears and muzzle thrown
Over his slender outstretched limbs,
Dreams deeper as the firelight dims:
But Guendolen is wide awake;
Vassal and lord to the chase have gone;
Ralph and the dame and the drowsy crone
Watch in Sir Ethel's hall alone.

Wide awake was Guendolen;
Sometimes she paced the oaken floor,
Or, pausing at the barrèd door,
Hearkened a space, and turning then
Hung musing o'er the flames again.
Sometimes she teased the bird, that still,
Hiding under its painted wing,

Answered her call and whet its bill

Against the rim of its silver swing.

And once from turrets twain, enshrined

Deep in the heart of a wooded dell,

A sound came coupled with the wind

Like a slow counted knell.

“How goes the night by the abbey bell?”

Cried Ursula, awaking then;

“’Tis twelve o’ the clock,” said Guendolen;

“Get thee to rest,” said Guendolen;

“For me, good mother, I may not sleep,

So wild a wind comes up the glen,

So wild a moan the forests keep.”

Now to her rest the crone hath gone;

Ralph asleep in the warder’s chair,

Is sitting without by the postern stair;

And Guendolen watches alone.

Swart shadows seemed to peer and float

Deep in the corners and niches dim;

Over and under the rafters grim

Flitted the bat; and an owl without,

In the fitful pauses of wind and rain,
Tapped his beak at the window pane.

The wind is high and the clouds fly fast,
But the stars shine out and the rain is past.
“Oh, for the first gray glance of morn!
Oh, for a blast of Sir Ethel’s horn!
Chill is my heart, I know not why.
Haunting the night with its boding eye,
With crest erect, and ruffled wing,
My bird sits watchful on its swing;
In his sleep the hound whines soft,
The bat drops down from his flight aloft;”
She pauses with a fearful start,
With eyes upraised, and lips apart,
And locked hands clasped across her heart.
Shrill through the wind, far up the glen,
What voice had shrieked “Help, Guendolen!”
Glancing up at the casement high,
She catches a glimpse of the western sky,
But nothing sees save the stars that stand
At anchor in its dark lagoon,

And the night, with a cloud like a snow-white hand,
Shading the moon.

Unmantled, alone,
Beneath portals of stone
Fringed around with wet mosses,
Low-arched, damp, and green,
The threshold she crosses
Unseen !

There were paths to the left, and paths to the right,
And one that struck through a frowning wood ;
This was gloomy, and narrow, and rude ;
Boughs above shut in the night ;
On either side an aspen stood
Turning its leaves to the silver light ;
And Guendolen here paused and paled,
For on that tree our Lord was nailed ;
Thence, from that day to this, 'tis said,
Stirs every leaf with separate dread.

Runlets that hide in the meadow grass,
Moan in the distance and sobbing pass ;

The clouds drift whiter, the flagging wind
Lies down in the brake like a wearied hind.

She hears the rain-drops gliding soft
To the leaf below from the leaf aloft;
She hears the breeze in its distant flight

Skimming over the marshy river,
And from the wood to the open night
Starts with a keen electric shiver.

Over the postern a loophole bright
Searches the dark with a lurid glare,
Ursula there with lamp alight
Sayeth her matin prayer.

What tempted her hither? What o'erstrained chord,
Struck in her heart by an elvish fear,
Knelled the voice of her absent lord
Into her wakeful ear?

It is the wind that round her lingers,
Plucking her back with its chilly fingers;
'Tis only a brook that yonder passes,
Stifling its sobs in the limp marsh grasses;
Those are pines in their funeral vesture,
Waving her on with a solemn gesture!

Out of the heart of the wooded dell
Three times tolls the abbey bell ;
And, in the wake of its echoed knell
 Follows a softer, weirder tone ;
Her heart upleaping at the sound,
 Under the clasp of her broidered zone
Grows eager as a leashed hound.
Not breathed into her straining ear,
But in her spirit, silver clear,
Spoken far, yet sounding near,
She hears Sir Ethel's voice again,
And the words "Help, Guendolen !"

She does not waken the hound asleep
 Dreaming within, by the glimmering light,
But treads alone through the forest deep,
 Trusting herself to the lawless night.
From drenchèd boughs the rain is shed
At every step on her shrinking head ;
Deep in the hollows, the stealthy vine
Catches her feet in its secret twine.
There are dancing lights in the marshes damp
Where the firefly kindles his fitful lamp,

All a-flame, like a burning gem
Dropped from a fiend's red diadem ;
Through the tufted moss, where the fern lies dead,
The glow-worm shimmers, and, over head,
A star betwixt the branches high
Looks down through the leaves like a panther's eye.

The path is lost, and Guendolen,
 Grown doubtful of her midnight fear,
Stands on the skirt of a hollow glen
 And sees the dawn appear.
But, ere the leaves wax green with day,
She knows the chase has passed that way.
The turf is broken and trampled sore,
 The low boughs hung with branches torn ;
Here lies the plume Sir Ethel wore,
 And here his silver hunting horn.
A steed that feeds at a fountain's edge,
Scared by her step, through the matted sedge
Drags his bruised limbs with pain,
Catching his hoof in the trailing rein.

The hills crowd close, and the vale between
Narrows to a deep ravine.

Here the sombre woods divide;
Clutching the rocks with roots outspread,
Trees that lean from either side

Make midnight overhead;
And only small bright blossoms grow
On the lawny turf that lies below.

But Guendolen, grown sudden pale,
Sinks fainting nigh the shadowy pass,
Seeing through a leafy veil

One pillowed on the grass.
With still arms tossed apart he lies,
Dark twilight waxing in his eyes.

Under the shade of a leaning crag
Hung with a scarlet parasite,
Two hounds that guard a wounded stag

Crouch at its left and right;
Old Victor, chiefest of the pack,
Gladdest at the bugle note,

Keenest on the mazy track——
Ripped lengthwise from the throat,

Holds back his moans in savage pride;
And Elf is panting on his side.
But Sylvia, wont to take her stand,
 Daily, by the castle board,
Feeding from her master's hand;
 Sylvia, that only loves her lord;
 That, heedless of another's word
Doeth gladly his behest,
Hath dragged herself across his breast,
And lies with limbs stretched out at rest.

Turning slowly his weary head,
"Sweet Guendolen!" the hunter said;
 "What, Sylvia, ho!" the panting hound
Only whimpered at the sound,
 Answering with dim upturned glance;
But she who slept a space beyond,
 Starting from her trance,
With light feet muffled by the sward
Drew nearer to her fainting lord.
Over his wounds and his weary brows
She laid wet leaves from the weeping boughs;

Silent, till a glad surprise
Dawned through the darkness in his eyes ;
Then from the bugle's ringing throat
Sped so long and wild a note,
Over the dells and the vales remote
A flight of arrowy echoes sprang,
From hill to hill the signal rang,
And echoing horns and hounds that cried
Out of the hollow glens replied.
They who beside the watch-fire's flame
Sought rest and food when even came,
And, heedless of the midnight storm,
 Slept pillowed on the reeking earth,
Believed their lord found shelter warm
Beside some cottage hearth ;
Nor guessed how, parted from his train,
He crossed the broken scent again,
And cheering with a hunter's zeal
 His flagging hounds upon the way,
With planted foot and brandished steel
 Held the brown stag at bay.

Now, startled by his bugle blast,
 Quitting their lairs in the scented grass,
Blythe hunters up the valley, fast,
 Came riding towards the lonely pass.

THE HEIR OF ROOKWOOD.

Down sunny hill-sides sloping to the west,
From Rookwood's towers the morning shadows fall
In long-drawn lines. A wooded eminence
Lifts o'er the walls and from its shoulders drops
A mantle of close tree-tops, right and left
Far trailing through the valleys. To the brink
Of a broad willowy stream the lawn descends,
Halved by an avenue of elms that winds
Up to gray Rookwood's portals. Here the roofs
Are thatched with moss, the massive stones worn smooth,
The windows blind with parasites. Whole miles—
Hill, vale, and river—are fenced in around.

We call it Rookwood, for the rooks all day
Caw from its dim old forests.

Bluff Sir Hugh,

The people named my father. Carven from life,
In Rookwood's chapel lies an effigy
That seems a giant's, with a couchant hound
Laid at its feet, and on the monument,
Writ in strange letters, framed to imitate
Some uncouth ancient character, a name,
Hugh Perceval. As one who kept old things
With such a reverent love, that in his house
Not even the fashion of a cup was changed;
As a bold hunter and a loyal knight,
The county knew him. So they shaped his tomb
After the custom of his ancestors,
And placed thereon a likeness of the hound
That whined beside his death-bed. I had scarce
Told eighteen summers when my father died.

My mother was unlike him, marble calm
As he was boisterous, and her daughters all
Grew to be youthful copies of herself.

Save that Maud sat within the oriel window
Broidering in gold; that Marian with her mother
On the old oaken settle, wrought for ever
The self-same tapestries—or so it seemed—
That Ernestine liked best the little footstool,
And sat there winding many-coloured wools,
Or weaving them through canvas: to my eye
They ever looked alike. They were all fair,
Grave, gentle, unimpassioned. I did weary
To see them at their broideries day on day.

For me—I had no pulse that, fast or slow,
Kept time with theirs. My sadness and my joy
Alike outstrode them. At my wilder moods
My father stared and swore; my mother's eyes
Filled with calm wonder, and my sisters three
Copied her, life-like. Was it strange I grew
Petulant, rude, morose—my urgent need
Of love, caresses and sustaining words
Left unsupplied? For I, fair Rookwood's heir,
Could scarcely drag my shapeless limbs the length
Of her broad halls.

I filled the weary days
Creeping from room to room, like some wild thing
Crippled and caged. My nature was athirst.
I had Sir Hugh's deep love of space and freedom,
His passion for brute beauty. Him I feared
And worshipped. From the oriels, sometimes,
I watched him with his dogs. One stood upright,
Steadying his paws upon his master's breast;
One crouched against his feet, and one had thrust
His muzzle through the hollowed hand. Ere long,
My cousin Arthur with his gun and pointers
Came up the lawn. Away together went
The uncle and boy nephew, leaving me
All passionate sorrow. Then I stole to watch
Ernestine at her broidery; else I heard
My sister Marian reading from those bards
Who flung the glittering lance of prophecy
Down the long future. When Sir Hugh returned,
Perhaps he bore me through the lawns awhile
On his broad breast; perhaps, when twilight came,
I nestled to his feet and heard him tell
His field exploits—and Arthur's—then break off

With a short sigh. His eye was like a hound's,
Earnest and steady, and for ever seemed
Hunting my maimed form.

But with childhood went
Part of my sickness. I might wander free
Through the green valleys, lawns and woods that graced
My fair inheritance. The garden chair
That had been wont to draw me, day by day,
Through dull familiar paths, reserved its aid
For weary moments, till my halting step
On the firm sod grew firmer, till my lips
Drank the bright air like wine.

The love that found
No peers to share its wealth, looked lower now.
A full heart asks not if the cup it crowns
Be gold or clay. I turned to brutes, to birds,
Even to flowers. The high-bred hound that paced
Grave at my side, the merlin that I tamed,
The dove I carried in my breast, the rose
With white wax buds, that from my window sill
Swung outward to the light—all these I kept
With a girl's care.

Through Rookwood's fair domain
Wanders a stream whose silent course is led
By mead and grove until its thread, abrupt,
Breaks on the sharp edge of a precipice.
Betwixt two hill-sides, o'er a deep ravine,
There with white shuddering feet, the waters seem
Fearfully pausing. But with one bold leap
They clear the rent rocks, shouting as they fall
Into a round clear pool, whose crystal sheen
Only the lilies break. Hither I came,
The timed waves harping to my sullen moods,
The banks my couch, my hound stretched near, a book
Of rhymes or romance in my listless hand.
No curious eyes, no cold looks following here
Jarred on my secret thoughts. The blossoms grew
No paler for my loving, the fresh turf
Pillowed most gently my uncourtly form.

I had gone forth one mellow autumn morn
Earlier than my wont. The night had passed
Rent by fierce storms. Torn boughs and drifted leaves
Cumbered the path I trod. The sun shone warm.

I lingered by the way until my hound,
That had gone first and reached the lilyed pool,
Set up a sharp cry. Through the opening wood,
I saw him crouch, as if in pain or fear,
And with quick step pressed on. My first keen glance
Took in the mantling lilies, with a web
Of white wet film meshed in them, and the next,
Brown shreds of curled hair and a face the waves
Flowed over.

Grasping at the floating robes
That drifted shoreward, steadying my feet
Upon the smooth sloped rocks, I drew her forth,
A woman fair and young. Her long loose hair
Curled round the lily stems, and held them fast
In its wet tangles. Jutting from the shore,
A rock whose sharp points caught her fluttering dress,
Upheld her as she lay. From this, 'tis like,
She sprang, and staid perforce, all night had borne
Tempest and beating rain. A scarlet wreath
Crowned her cold temples, and around her throat
Hung rows of coral buds. Strangest of all,
Bound to her bosom by a silken scarf,

•

And sheltered in its folds, an infant lay,
Faint but yet breathing.

When some days had passed
And no one claimed her, nigh the chapel grounds
We laid the mother, guessing at the wrongs
That had bewildered her. To me, the child,
As 'twere a toy, was given when I asked.

'Twas a strange whim, but on my birth-day morn,
And to my favourite shores, some fate had brought
What seemed a gift, and I, accepting it,
Thought to please Heaven. A nature to be trained
Which way I would, or twined round any prop—
Even my own rude self—a page whereon
To write the latent poem of my life.
These thoughts were merely audible, as the notes
Of birds that stir betimes upon the nest.

Wild stories were afloat—'twas said that she
Who slept in the green vale had cast a spell
Over the heir of Rookwood; that her babe
Was elf or water-sprite; and whispering gossips

Told how the infant at her baptism
Made the old chapel ring with saucy laughter,
While that which answered from the niches dim,
Was wilder than an echo. Be it so.
She was Christ's child, signed with His holy cross,
On brow and breast.

It was *my* fanciful thought
To call her Lilia; she whom we had plucked
Out of the lily leaves.

Oh pleasant times!
Only a patron's golden alms, at first,
I gave my pensioner, in boyish pride
Masking my heart; but as the child grew strong,
The little seed of tenderness that lay
Hid in my bosom, thrust into the light
The embryo of a tree with buds and blooms
Shut in its folded being.

Infancy
Lay like a wreath of spring flowers on her brow;
But the rude breast whereon I grafted her,
Shot through the pale veins of my elfin charge
Its own abounding life. 'Twas I who trained

Her feet upon the level lawns, and taught
Her lips their blossom language. Then, betimes,
Lest the coarse peasant earth should clog its roots,
For gentler nurture my fair foreign plant
To Rookwood I conveyed.

To those dim halls,
Where the blithe common sunshine of the fields
Put on grave splendour; to those druid shades,
Came the fresh nature of the untrained child
Like an opposing element. Her voice
Broke the long silence of the morning hours.
Either she went forth through the lawns with me,
Or at my mother's footstool strewed her playthings,
Prattling aloud, and at the rare rebuke,
Reading her face with unabashed grave eyes,
Till Maud glanced sidelong with a stately smile,
And fair calm Marian, with a woman's impulse,
Bent down and took the lone child to her heart.
Even Ernestine, who o'er her broidery needle
Secretly dreamed of tournaments and masques,
And cavaliers be-plumed, whose very dolls
Had been court ladies in brocade and velvet,

Put by her rainbow paroquets and roses
To fashion garments for the elf child Lilia ;
And even my lady mother deigned to smile,
Hearing her tiny step along the halls,
Watching the slow toil of her baby feet
Labouring from stair to stair. Her restless life
Was never still. She laughed out in her sleep,
Living the glad day over, and sometimes,
Blindfold with slumber, to the halls below
Crept from her turret chamber.

'Twas in vain

That when bright girlhood came, I tried to yoke
Her errant thoughts to mine. My elf charge paled
Over her books. She sighed for the pure air
Of crags and glens, her greyhound and her pony,
And for the free use of her glorious limbs.
She was lithe like a vine, and she could scale
The rocks as lightly. The long summer day
Was short to her if she might wander on
From hill-side to ravine, or ford the streams,
Or, resting on some island rock, her feet
Bare glancing through the waves, twine pallid wreaths

Of lilies, ferns, and dripping water weeds
For her brown hair. Yet to my side she stole,
If seated near the liliated pool I read
Romance or poem, and when winter nights
Drew us around the hearth, she came to plead
For wilder fables, listening at my feet,
With ear attentive and chained lips, until
Her blue eyes with excess of terror grew
Darker, like fair lakes frozen. If she played,
The crags were royal palaces, her doll
A captive princess, and herself a knight
Who, armed with spear and shield, came to the rescue.

She was a child still when my sister Maud
Passed from our halls, a willing bride, with love
Ruffling her inborn calmness just so much
As a dove, drinking at a marble fount,
Troubles the water. Marian followed soon,
And Ernestine, left lonely, to my side,
Stole for companionship.

We three together
Would wander through the woodlands, till the path

We loitering followed broke against a hedge
That parted Rookwood from the broad domain
Nursed for my cousin Arthur, who, abroad,
Studied the graces of a foreign court.

The idle tales linked to my Lilia's birth
Were not forgotten. Peasants, round their hearths,
Told how they'd seen her upon giddy boughs
Rocked like a bird to slumber; how she sat
On the wet rocks and crowned her hair with flowers,
Singing witch melodies. Some even swore
They'd met her spirit in the fields at night,
White-robed and talking softly.

I had made -

No secret of the past, but led my charge,
When her small feet could tread the unequal path,
Down to the liliated pool, and told her there
Of the pale lady crowned with scarlet blooms,
Whose hair curled round the lily stems, whose arms
Sheltered an infant; and I think this gave
A colour to her nature.

Did I note

As the months passed, her beauty's quick perfecting?
I only knew that she had stood between
Me and my boyhood's peril; that the love
She lighted in my soul, was like a flame
That, kindled in some close unwholesome cave,
Burns out mephitic vapours. I was happy—
Armed with strong thoughts, aspiring every day
To nobler wisdom; and as fountains, falling,
Do pluck down rainbows, even by baffled effort
Made hopeful; health to my misshapen limbs
With manhood come; and strength, if discontent
Held up her mirror, or ambition flashed
His blazing sword athwart its path, to curb
My startled spirit—tranquil with my books,
Save when sweet Lilia lured me from their sway,
Breaking the calm of thought with her light jests,
As one flings down on some unsparkling lake
Handfuls of blossoms. Rumours of the world,
Flying o'er Rookwood, dropped to Ernestine
Seeds that put forth. She hungered for the life
Of courts and cities. She was born for these,
And Lilia's wild ways only served to warn

And chide her into stateliness. A flower
That grows beside a cataract imbibes
Not less the nature of its restless neighbour.

Fronting the sunset, Rookwood's library
Looks down the lawn; and up that gradual slope,
The west wind, loitering, hums a song it learned
Down by the tuneful river. River-scents
Blow through the oriels; shade and quiet fill
The book-lined room. 'Twixt rows of oaken shelves
Are hung two dusky pictures—St. Jerome,
Framed in the dark mouth of his desert cave;
A brindled lion couchant at his feet;
Pondering the gospels—and, a space beyond,
White companies of angels flock to thee,
Lily of heaven, Cecilia! One recess
O'ervaults an organ's gilded pipes, and here
Many an evening, Ernestine and Lilia
Sang to my stormy playing. Lilia's voice
Was like the gay dance of a bayadere,
Aerially light, but Ernestine's
Stately as gondolas that glide between

Ranked palaces, and with slow keels plough up
Their glassy pictures. On my sister's lip
The round notes dwelt, till each in full completeness
Seemed fallen for mellowness, like dropping fruit;
But Lilia's bright-winged song capricious flew
From flower to flower of sound. Here came my mother,
Aged and bent, the windows of her mind
Opaque with wintry frost. With folded hands
And drooping head she sat, while on its wings
The music bore her through a twilight past—
Over the stagnant waters of a lake
Up whose dead waves a phantom city gleamed,
Gleamed up in swaying downward.

. Lilia's chamber

Was over mine. I could not see its windows—
But on the turret facing hers, sometimes,
A shadow gliding gently to and fro,
And once when it fell darkly, I could mark
How she had shaken her long tresses down
To braid them for the night coif.

Through my sleep

Even, her light laugh and her elfin tread

Constantly wandered. Nay, once fully roused
By the near sound of steps, I could have sworn
That where the winding stair abruptly turned
Close by my door, the hem of a white robe
Ruffled the darkness.

On my mother's lips
Lay the recording marble. I had set
Betwixt the world's reproach and Lilia's name
The bulwark of my love. Wooed ever yet
Lover so coldly? With my blighted manhood
I weighed her fairest youth, counted the years
Dividing us, and warned her if one thought
Recoiled from me 'twere wisdom to invoke
Death, sickness, beggary, torment in all shapes,
Rather than chain to her offended soul
The deep disgust of an unwelcome love.
Lilia, the child, shy pressing to my heart,
Lilia, the girl, just taught the trick of blushes,
Answered me without words.

And from that hour
Lilia was mine, however wooed or won ;
My plighted wife, though Ernestine might wear

A triple scorn upon her brow ; my bride,
Though all my haughty peers cried fie upon me ;
Who should lay down the law to Rookwood's heir ?
I'd rain bright gold o'er Lilia's shameful birth,
Express the stigma on her name in diamonds.
The groaning coffers that my pride had slighted,
Opened their mouths in praise of her betrothal.

My life was little changed ; 'twas nothing new
If when I walked, hung Lilia on my path
Talking her wayward fancies ; nothing new
If when I read, stole Lilia to my side,
And o'er the page I pondered open laid
A volume of the idle rhymes she loved ;
That I must quit my garland of rare thoughts
To twine her wreath of bluets ; nothing new
That her light steps kept ever count of mine,
That she beset me with her wilful ways,
That she was ever near me. I was all
Her world. She had no other. From the day
Her baby feet first tottered o'er the lawns,
Lilia had been my shadow. In my heart

Love lay too deep. 'Twas buried from my sight.
The spoils of sixteen summers rose above it.
Life's reddest flower unfolded like a lily
For want of light. I needed sterner teaching—
Unapt to read the riddle of past days,
To twist in one their many-coloured threads,
To see the scattered brightness of my life
Concentred to a star.

'Twas early May.

Across the lawns, to woods and waves beyond
We had been loitering. Ernestine and I
Looked from its high banks to the stream below,
Part veiled with drooping boughs—and, ankle deep
In grass and yielding moss—from rock to rock
Dropped our sure-footed Lilia, till at last,
Safe on the pebbly shore, she turning, threw
Her long locks back, and lifting eyes brimful
Of elvish laughter, called, "Hark, Ernestine!
My father is a water sprite, and see,
The vine, my mother, leans to his embrace
From the rough rocks he scales. Therefore I twine
Wet water weeds and scarlet pendent blooms

In my curled hair !'' The echoes shook her laugh
To silvery fragments, as the rocks below
Brake the melodious waters. Ere she paused,
A white hound and a youth that chid him back
Came up the hollow. When his lifted face
Questioned my own, I knew my cousin Arthur.

The boy my father loved was now a man
Cast in his mould, but round whose manhood hung
A studied courtliness, unlike Sir Hugh's
Rough royalty. Disdain on Arthur's lip,
Tamed by disgust, sat like a wearied falcon.
There burned no fire within his listless eye,
No eager impulse leaping from his heart
Waved the red colours on his cheek, his voice
Was sweet and even as a stream that has
Never a rock to break against.

To lie

Out on the green sward, pillowing his head
Upon the sleek neck of some favourite hound,
Follow the watercourses, rod and line
Swung idly o'er his shoulder, walk his horse

Along the bridle-paths—reins dropped and arms
Folded in thought—or in a voice whose cadence
Silvered the roughest measures, read aloud
Ballad or romance writ in sweet old French;
That quaint old French once married to our English,
Rude spelt, and garnished with “Ma foys” and “Pardys;”
Perchance to dream,—an arm flung o’er his eyelids
While Lilia touched the organ, and without
Twilight grew dark and rose the evening star,
Adding her silver splendours to the night—
Was life enough for Arthur.

June was over.

When did I first miss Lilia from my side?
Thoughts she was wont to scatter wandered now
As wildly in her absence. Everywhere,
Within doors and without, a vague discomfort
Haunted my steps. And where was idle Lilia?
Why, loitering down the walks at Arthur’s side,
Why, riding his black hunter, on the lawn,
Feeding his hound with biscuit, reading rhymes
At Arthur’s side in the deep library window.
So answered Ernestine, and drooped her head

Sideways to hide a smile.

I could not stoop
To doubt my plighted wife. 'Twas natural—
Strangers were rare at Rookwood. Arthur told
Gay tales of foreign courts—had wandered far.
His traveller's magic held her in its spell.
Well might she weary of my side, and long,
Poor child, for wider ranging—thus I reasoned.
But as the weeks wore on, my pride spoke louder,
And every morn flung back the coiled suspicion
I nightly tore, indignant, from my breast.
Ernestine's cold smile and attentive glance,
Lilia's dropt eyes, flushed cheek, and faltering tongue,
Arthur's calm gaze for ever following Lilia,
Angered me all alike.

'Twas after midnight.
Too bright the moon across my pillow shone—
I rose to drop the curtain and looked forth.
'Twas after midnight. Lilia's lamp still burning?
Her shadow flitted o'er the turret wall,
Returned and paused. She stood before her mirror.
There she was gathering up her hair and buckling

A riband round her waist, and at her throat
Fastening the open folds of her thin robe.
Then all was dark. All silent too, I heard not
A step upon the stairs. Suddenly issued
From the low tower door a figure clad
In filmy white. Across the lawns it fled.
Whither?

The stars were paling in the east
When my affianced wife came hurrying back.
I heard her pause beside my chamber door
That stood ajar, then, up the winding stair
Pass to her own.

I questioned her that morn
With keen, cold eyes. Her flashing glance braved mine,
Wavered and fell—a glittering blade struck down
By heavier steel. Thenceforth she fled me. Came
Our bridal day and passed. I would not note it,
And Lilia—had forgot.

I'd fallen asleep
One day at noon—my slumber so transparent,
That through its painted curtain of swift dreams,
Shone, visible, the steadfast things beyond.

Vision extinguished vision, yet I knew—
Held by the light imperious touch of sleep—
I did but dream in the deep library chair.
Dreamed I that faltering step across the threshold?
The sob, the kiss quick dropped upon my hand?
I grappled with my sleep and flung it from me.
No one!—yet Arthur's spaniel, lying near,
Beat on the carpet with his feathery tail.

I had been trained in sorrow's hardy school,
No raw recruit in suffering. Fate might pluck
At my life's core. I smiled as one who sees
War's mailed hand snatch off the silken favour
Bound to his helm, but has no mind for that
To drop his sword's point. While my bleeding heart
Craved leave to count its wounds, while every thought
Concealed a knife, while to all earth and heaven
Seemed half divulged the story of my grief,
So curiously did all things hint at it—
I walked beneath the vigilant eye of sorrow,
As walk her darlings. Not enough to hide
My hurt from prying looks—this pride will do,

And take her pay in heart throes—from myself
I hid my grief that was my inmost self!
The poisonous fruit that life let fall for me
I held in cautious hands, and wary thought
Did only graze the outer rind of sorrow,
Knowing there was a bitter core within
She must not feed upon.

The sob, the tear,
Albeit but visions, did their angel errand,
And my roused heart made answer.

All that night

I watched beside my casement. So the next.
And so the next. No Lilia! Through the day
I hung upon her footsteps. Arthur, too,
He ever at her side, and I, apart,
A careless loiterer whom chance had thrown
Into their company. 'Twas then I marked
Lilia's white cheek, faint step, and hollow laugh
That made mirth pitiful. Alas, poor child—
An infant to this worldling! Had my pride
,Suffered her erring feet unchid to wander

Into his net? 'Twas thus my heart arraigned me
Unfaithful to my trust.

A crescent moon
Waxed into golden fulness. Came a night
Of blended light and storm. High craggy clouds,
Along whose clefts the constant lightning played,
Rose toppling o'er the hills, and, half-way hung,
Betwixt the zenith and pale horizon.
The moon was struggling upward. Midnight near,
I, seated at my window, heard again
Footsteps above, and marked her lamp's pale ray
Paint Lilia's semblance on the turret wall.
I heard her pass my door and saw her stand
Upon the lawn beneath, ere, shrouding close
My figure in a mantle's dark disguise,
I followed.

Nay, how light across the turf
She trod—across the turf where I had guided
Her infant steps! Not down the lane that led
To Arthur's boundaries. Soon the swollen wave
Was audible. She stood and listened then
With lifted hand. Did Arthur meet her there?

The blood leaped through my heart, a pale mist swept
Over my eyes, the very earth was thrilling,
Reeling beneath my feet. Lilia fled on.
She trod the brink of the ravine. Broad oaks
Embraced her with their shadows. While I scarce
Discerned her flowing draperies, the moon
Withdrew its light.

I followed through the darkness—
A perilous path! I tracked her by the sound
Of crashing brush and slippery stones displaced
Tumbling into the hollow. Outstretched boughs
Forbade me with their firm extended arms.
Vines caught my feet, far-reaching brambles held
My garments. In the river's lifted voice
There was a fearful cadence, and the wind
Rose shrill and sudden. Then the cataract
Grew hoarser, louder, till all sounds were trampled
Under its eager feet. The boughs o'erhead
Were instantly divided. Breathless, faint,
I stood above the waterfall and felt
Its white waves leap beneath me.

Where was Lilia?

I pried into the gloom. I shouted "Lilia!"
My tongue was palsied by the rushing waters.
They tore the sweet name from my lips and fled.
Down the rough brake, along this dizzy path,
How had she kept her way? Frantic, I cast
My mantle back, and springing to the edge
Of the sheer rock, made ready for a leap
Wild as the cataract's. Just then, the moon,
As one who bears a lamp from stair to stair
Clambering a ruin, through the crevices
Of the black cloud obscurely shone, and stood
On its torn battlements.

The deep ravine

Was flooded with its light. Beneath my feet
Lay the round pool to which the waters leapt.
The air was heavy with a languid perfume,
For white unfolding to the moonlight gleamed
The web of lilies, whence I'd plucked my Lilia.
But where the child? Up from the leafy pool
I raised my eyes and glanced along the rocks
That overhung it. From my heart, a cry
Sprang to my lips and paused.

High o'er a ledge,
That, level with the stream, had once upheld
Her hapless mother, on the rock's sharp edge,
Steadying the hollow of her daring foot,
Stood Lilia. Who but Lilia so could venture?
What did she there? and what a trysting-place!
And where was Arthur?

In my eagerness,
Forward I pressed. The overhanging rock
She leaned from, nearly faced me. Clad in white,
In filmy white fair-robed from head to foot,
She stood, how like a form I well remembered!
My heart was sudden cold. Old stories thronged
My memory. Of a maniac mother born—
So strange in all her ways—alone, at night,
To wander hither? Lilia! oh the child!
The girl! the woman worth all life to me!
And I had wronged her by the cruellest thought!
Live, Lilia, live—be his—be anything—
Be aught but *that*! My sick heart paused, for Lilia
Lifting her eyes, thereon, as on full urns
Held the moon's glitter.

To my form they turned,
Yet spake no wonder. Vacant, cold, they wandered
Over the wild bright firmament. Sweet angels!
Where had I seen that look in Lilia's eyes?
Betwixt the dreamer and my soul there glided
A picture strange yet fair—Rookwood's old hall
Half gloom, half firelight; by the chimney corner
A crowd of wondering varlets; at the door
My mother with a smile upon her lip;
And on the oaken stair, her chamber taper
Lit in her hand, and her unconscious eyes
Fast held by sleep, a child in flowing night-robes!
The vision faded from me—then—'twas done
Ere I could breathe—her white arms tossed aloft,
Lilia sprang forward. Through the moonlight flitted
That lightest form. The parted waves laughed out
Embracing her—the lilies closed above.

'Twas then I woke—from rock to rock mad leaping,
A lion's strength was raging in my limbs.
The smiling waves received me. In their arms,
Oh what a fight with death! Down those cool depths

What frantic wrestling! Did the weeds below
Entangle her? I rose and dived again,
It seemed a thousand times. Then, spent and blind,
Sprang to the surface. From beneath the lilies
Gleamed out a face. I caught her from their net,
And flung my burden on the shore.

How long

Ere through her eyes' blue depths my Lilia's soul
Bloomed up again as lilies through the wave?
All wonder, shame, and joy, was in the face
That questioned mine. There, where my arms had twice
Plucked her from death's cold bosom, in that spot
Thick sown with lovely memories, as its banks
In spring with violets, she could not hide
Her heart from mine. 'Twas Ernestine had struck
The jarring chord. 'Twas Ernestine, whose pride
Let fall the hint that turned my Lilia's love
For one who had but gold to offer her,
Into deep shame; who whispered that she sold
Her loveliness to one who paid its price
Only for pity. 'Twas so slight a net
Had meshed our Cupid's feet. If Arthur, heir

To Rookwood, next to me, with Ernestine,
Had plotted for himself, or did but wing
Some idle hours, unthoughtful of the future
My marriage was to mar, at Lilia's side,
I never knew.

'Tis many years since then;
And while I write in Rookwood's library,
The velvet shadows of an August evening
Slant down the lawn, and on a grassy bank
Beneath the window where I sit, is Lilia.
Her braided hair lies smooth upon her brow.
Her blue eyes have grown thoughtful, though her lips
Have the same passionate life. The babe she rocks
Upon her bosom has a brow no calmer.
All her wild ways have fallen from my Lilia,
As its superfluous blossoms from the tree.
My boy, who lies beside her on the lawn,
Plays with his brace of pointers.

Ernestine

Is Arthur's wife, and mistress of his home
And heart. Her beauty has been praised by kings.
Her face is welcome at our English court.

The dream of all her childhood is fulfilled.
Her boys and girls are lovely as their mother;
Arthur has heirs enow to bear his name
Adown through coming years; but Arthur's children
Will scarcely play the lord in bonny Rookwood.

CHRISTMAS.

WHY do the bells keep ringing?—

It is Christmas.

Without, in the snowy street,

Thou mayest hear a sound of feet;

The noise of people who pass

On their way to hear midnight mass

At the church around the corner.

Holy Christmas!

Why dost thou call it holy,

Holy Christmas?—

Child, upon a Christmas night,

Rose the wondrous star whose light

Led three magi to the manger
Where reposed a royal stranger
Once discrowned for thy salvation.
Blessed Christmas !

How discrowned for my salvation
On a Christmas ?—
God loved the world so well—
The mystic Gospels tell—
That He sent His Son divine,
For the world's sake—thine and mine—
To be born of a pure virgin
On a Christmas.

Born of the Virgin Mary
On a Christmas—
Ay, the mother undefiled,
But he loves us both, my child,
Quite as dearly as his mother,
If we serve him and none other,
If we take his cross upon us.
Precious Christmas !

Do we take His cross upon us
Now, this Christmas?
It is deadly dark and damp,
The palest ray of a lamp
Were a comfort in this place;
And snow and hail, apace,
Without, came down together.
Stormy Christmas!

How the snow and hail come down
When 'tis Christmas!—
Yes, the nights wax long and cold,
And the winds wax rough and bold;
Neither snow, nor hail, nor rain,
Shall provoke us to complain,
For we bear His cross, sweet Jesu;
On this Christmas.

We will bear His cross, sweet Jesu,
On this Christmas!—
Child, how deadly cold thou art—
Creep closer to my heart.

I will stretch myself part over thee,
These thin rags scarcely cover thee.

Oh the night, the night is fearful!
Bitter Christmas!

Yes, the nights are very fearful,

Now 'tis Christmas.—

I keep thinking of other days,
Of our Christmas hearth in a blaze,
Of the sweetest time in my life,
When I'd been one year a wife,

And thou wert a baby, dearest!

Happy Christmas!

I was only a baby then,

On that Christmas—

Thou wert only a babe at the breast,
But the sweetest, dearest, best!

Thy father might weary of me,
But how could he stray from thee?

Boy, he has left us to perish!

What a Christmas!

Yes, we must surely perish

On this Christmas—

Oh darling, creep closer to me ;

Strange are the faces I see,

Lights flash about in the room,

As though up through the desolate gloom

Sprang the angels proclaiming Messiah—

Wondrous Christmas !

If they sing to us of Messiah,

Happy Christmas !—

Adrift on the stormy weather,

Come the organ notes fitfully hither.

I could sleep awhile if I tried ;

Creep close, close to my side,

Lay thy head on my shoulder.

Icy Christmas !

Wake, neighbour, noon is over.

Merry Christmas !—

No one answers call or knock ;

And they shatter the crazy lock.

Then the Christmas sun, cold shining,
Lights the twain in sleep reclining.

Strange to sleep so late in the morning
On a Christmas.

WOULDST thou persuade my bitter mood to gladness—
Hush thy light laugh, withhold thy merry jest ;
Mirth only spurs to grief my present sadness,
Vexing my heart, an ill-timed busy guest.

While fast and full the sullen tides roll o'er me,
Seek not to charm me with thy lovely song.
And stay thy hand, be silent, I implore thee ;
Touch not the chords that deeper chords prolong.

Oh look without—arrayed in calmest splendour,
The hills stand rapt, the vales are swathed in gloom,
Speak to me now, but words austere yet tender,
High as the stars and humble as the tomb.

That drawing near life's low-arched narrow portal,
We catch faint glimpses as of heights sublime ;
And looking up, behold how hopes immortal
Shine through some fissures in the walls of time.

A M I N A.

SHE was the Sun's bride—such mock majesty
Her vagrant fancy took. His chosen bride;
For he had won her with one burning kiss
Pressed on her forehead, as an August noon
Stooped to the reeling vineyards.

Mad Amina!

But hers was lovely madness. Pity's self
Withheld its meed. Eyes brimful of sweet laughter,
Black hair bound up with flowers, limbs light as breezes—
Behold Amina! Flying from her kind,
She haunted rocks and caves; gentlest of all
The gentle things she dwelt among. The fawns

That rested in the valleys, knew her step
And fled not. From the oaks' broad canopy
The birds sang ever louder as she passed.

All her glad life was poetry. She hymned
The Sun at morn and wept for him at eve.
She climbed the mountain precipice to give
The eagles messages, what time they beat
Their wings against the brazen dome of noon.
The waves her bridegroom kissed baptized her brow,
The flowers he warmed were hid within her breast.

Noon had lain down among the harvest fields,
The reapers were gone home. Amina there,
Prone amid flowers, her clasped hands on her brow,
Talked to the cumbrous shadows.

Cloud on cloud

Rolled to the west and melted at its verge,
And left a dome of dusky azure, where
Evening seemed busy spinning her thin web,
Though it was noon. Whence fell the shadowy sadness?
Over the pools the trees hung motionless,

And watched their fading pictures. In the thicket,
No insect chirruped, and no tuneful bee
Sang in the rose. But from the distant grange,
A cock crowed shrill and ghostly as the blue
Distilled a stealthy twilight.

Darker yet,
The owl was hooting, and the giddy bat
Wheeled on his drunken flight. The wood-birds fled
Unwearied to their nests. Along the hollows,
The cattle in their pastures seemed asleep.

Amina, crouching in the harvest blooms,
Upraised her questioning eyes. Oh, wonder thus
To see the great Sun like a flower fade
Out of the fields of heaven! oh, worse than wonder!
Shrieking she rose. Into the valley strayed
A mountain path. Up this, Amina sprang,
Plucking the gaudy chaplets from her hair.
Mid-way betwixt bleak crest and wooded base
She halted, wild and breathless. At her feet,
A jutting crag burst from the forest boughs
And overhung the valley. Downward gazing,

She saw the ghastly upturned face of earth,
Then dared to look above. A lurid ring
Half circled the dim chalice of the sun
That overflowed with darkness.

Was he dying?—

The royal lover to her madness wedded—
Slain in his chariot as a king in battle—
Or only veiling in capricious anger
The long love-look that woke his bride at morn,
And dwelt on her at noon, and lingered brightly
Round her at eve? She knelt with outstretched arms
Till, shorn of every beam, she saw her monarch
Discrowned, a blind and beggared outcast, grope
His way across the blasted plains of heaven.

The wondrous shadow faded—cheerful day
Lit the blithe reapers to their work again.
When sunset came, one, leaning on his scythe,
And following with his eye a hawk's flight upward,
Marked on the moss-capped overhanging rock,
A white prone form, and said, "It is Amina.
She sleeps, and does not wake to say farewell,

Knceling with claspèd hands, to the late Sun
That flares his crimson torch across her eyelids.”
But on the morrow, as a hunter bears
The quarry home—some white-limbed tender doe—
He came down from the mountain through the valleys,
Amina’s light form hanging o’er his shoulder.
For she was dead for sorrow, mad Amina !

S O N G.

DAWN paints thy lattice ;
The virginal hours
Fold in thy sweet soul
Its night-blooming flowers ;
Lakes in the hollows,
And clouds in the skies,
Drink in the light
Like thy beautiful eyes,—
Sunbeams betraying
Where bright waters be—
Morn of my heaven,
Oh smile thou for me !

Lo ! from the peak

Where the red rowan clings,
Softly the day descends,

Trying her wings ;

Hares shake the copses,

And larks brush the leaves,

And swallows stir lightly

Beneath the broad eaves ;

The bird is awakening

His song on the tree ;

Bird of my morning,

Wake music for me !

KATHLEEN.

WHAT moans with the east wind?

Ah, listen, Aileen!

Through the dull mist and rain

I hear it complain.—

'Tis only the shriek of the curlew,

Kathleen!

I look to the sea-side,

The pale shore, Aileen!

There is something adrift

That the waves toss and lift—

A boat, tempest-torn from its moorings,

Kathleen!

Under the day-dawn

She steals forth, Aileen.

What lies nigh the door,

By the waves sent ashore ?

Oh deep be thy slumbers this morning,

Kathleen !

BALLAD.

COME, Giulia, braid my hair; smooth let it be;
Some other time I'll do my best for thee.
Thine is so rippled! Mine one even flow,
Nor wave, nor curl—'tis well—Alesso likes it so.

Look how Helena shakes. Is't so much colder?
Too cold for clouds. I would the moon were older!
'Twill light him, though. Oh put thy work away,
Sister! come near the fire. It is no longer day.

We'll have no flowers but sea-flowers, wreaths, spray-fair,
Alesso's self shall crown my braided hair.
Sister, come help! Forget thine old, old sorrow.
I cannot think of grief. A bride I'll be to-morrow!

Is the moon up? Methinks the wind gets loud.
See'st thou the boat? Is yon dark speck a cloud, Helena,
look!

(Once I too, had a lover,
Waited his sail, his step—sweet days for ever over!)

Yes, 'tis the boat. What was Helena saying?
The boat, the boat! Hist, how the hound keeps baying!
Smooth down my braids. Let's make the fire burn
faster.

Let Beppo loose—without!—Go welcome back thy
master.

M A R G A R E T.

HILLS that roll back to mountains, close
The holy vale that shrines St. Rose :
The mountain tops let down their snows
Into a river that southward flows.
The hills that crowd to the water's edge,
Sink into the wave through the slimy sedge.
When the chapel bell aloft is swinging
Ten thousand airy peals keep ringing ;
Echoes from forest and bluff and dell,
Follow the lead of the chapel bell,
Along the lonely river sighing,

Out of the blue air failing, dying,
Like birds down dropped from over flying,
Lost in the chiming of waves that flow
To a city that's built on the banks below.

When the last glory of day has paled,
Out of the valley a mist, exhaled
From river and dingle and marish moss,
Rises up to the chapel cross,
Over the lap of the vale adrift
With the chapel cross in the midst uplift.

Nigh to the altar in bride's array,
Is one who died on her marriage day.
With marble palms together prest
She lies in breathless stone exprest;
A ripe rose, bursting on her breast,
Strews with its blooms her flowing vest.
In sculptured lilies fairly set,
Is writ the sweet name, Margaret;
And at her feet an angel stands
Praying, with uplifted hands.

When yesternoon at the altar rail,
A bride drew back her shining veil,
And through the door and up the aisle,
The daylight followed like a smile,
Methought yon marble—pallid now

Under the moon's upcreeping tide—
From swelling breast to cheek and brow,

Blushed crimson with indignant pride,
As if the dead that lay below
Angered to hear the bridal vow,

Her lips grew pale repeating,
After the lapse of a single year
Breathed in her lord's forgetful ear.

But when I looked again,
Above, the August sun kept beating
Against the chancel pane,
And striking through a martyr's crown,
Showered a blood-red glory down.

She, that was heir to a lordly pride,

Leant from the arms of her high-born mother
To the low fount of a peasant's breast;

I was her foster brother.

And on one bosom, side by side,
Lulled by the same rude song to rest,
Our hearts grew early to each other.

No scion of a race out-worn
By gilded vice or lordly sloth,
By peasants nursed, of warriors born,
She drew her glowing life from both.

No gentle bower maiden, she,—
Trained at her lady-mother's knee,
Into the slow-wrought tapestry
Weaving her youth,—but wild and free.
The shrill cliff-building echoes knew

Her voice by height and holt remote,
Following fast its silver clue

Like birds that mock another's note.
And light the mountain paths she trode,
And light her blooded palfrey rode,
Gladdest when gay winds at sport,
Set the green branches all astir,
Bowing and bending over her;
The bloodhounds chained in the castle court,

Welcomed her leaping and harmlessly playing,
And her steed in the stable answered by neighing.

Rode she forth—I had leave to follow
Close at her bridle; to loiter free
By hill-side and wave-side and lone wood hollow,
Their high-flown pride would not swoop to me.
The slow spring-wind might, passing, bear
My peasant's breath across her hair,
Nor bid the rose-buds swelling there
Put forth one dewy leaf betimes,
And so I wooed her but in rhymes,
And praised her but as minstrels praise—
Spending my soul in courteous lays—
I might tilt with keen despair
Wooing her all my aimless days.
Thus, till drawn nigh to womanhood,
Her girlhood, like a Scottish snood,
Loose in her dark locks, Margaret stood.

'Twas then my love found voice and breath;
Not faint with hope, not meek in prayer,

But cold as pride, and stern as death,
Defiant in its strong despair.
Even was darkening down the day,
And soft the vesper call came, blown,
Under the arched oaks, vast and gray;
We trod the chapel path alone.
I faced her on the narrow way.

How to my lips my spirit leaped,
Ask not—*it was so long ago!*
If burning heart and brain have kept
True record of that time, or no,
I will not question. Tears of rage
And grief once marred the crowded page;
And hourly to my weary soul,
Did my sick heart recite it over.
'Twould move me little now—a faded scroll
Writ by pale hands that paler marbles cover.

If Margaret met me now at morn
In paths where once we wandered free,
Her dark eyes, lit at sight of me,
Scarce held in leash their eager scorn.

Her cheek grew pale at my approach,
Grew sudden pale and flushed again.
Nor might she longer bide my touch
Upon her flowing bridle rein.
Where woods are dark and waters chime,
Another's step with hers kept time;
And where along the valley glooms
My hand had checked her palfrey's pride,
Gay cavaliers with floating plumes
Came lightly riding at her side.

I waited in the chapel aisle,
'Twixt morning-mass, and noon:
The organist in the organ loft
Played a sweet piping tune.
The noon-lights, crimson-stoled and soft,
Went gliding up the sacred pile,
From nave to altar solemnly.
And the golden cups on the chapel shrine,
Seemed brimmed with sacramental wine;
And I could almost see

God's silence from the blue above,
Descending like His holy Dove.

I knew her lightest step, before
The bride's train reached the chapel door;
Upon their flowing garments wearing
Sunshine that flecked the chapel floor.
And she passed on with queenly bearing,
Yet, kneeling by the altar rail,
Closer drew her bridal veil;
Yet, crowding to the altar's foot,
Part rose, like one irresolute,
And from her lips the marriage vow
Slid like a snow wreath, cold and slow.

This scarcely spoken,
De l'Orme pressed smiling near, but she
Motioned him back, and full on me
Turned for a moment's flying space
The unveiled meaning of her face,

Where love had broken
Away from pride, with swift auroral bloom
Flushing my night of life ere lost in coldest gloom.

Then anger, shame, and cold disdain,
Warred on those paling lips again,
Till slowly, like a sullen rain,

The life-drops, tortured from her heart,
Spotted the marble altar stair

As if some red rose, burst apart,
Had strewed its petals there.
And she fell headlong, white and mute,
Striking her brow at the altar's foot.
They said she died from mere excess
Of life and love and happiness!

Be yours the bridal kiss, De l'Orme,
That's proffered half, and half denied,
But leave to me yon silent form

Veiled closely in its marble pride.
Reverent as he who guards a shrine,
I may not call its beauty mine.

All passive though the slumberer be,
St. Mary, crowned with charms divine,
Is not more safe from love and me.

For passion pales to sorrow where
Yon sculptured angel kneels in prayer,
And passion's lightest breath would scare
The holy calm that watches there ;
For all love's wealth I may not dare
To touch lip, brow, or curlèd hair.
But when slow Even disappears
 Out of the west, and over all,
 Twilight is hanging like a pall
Thick dropped with silver tears ;
When from lone river and wet marsh moss,
The mist climbs up to the chapel cross
And over the vale, a spectral sea,
Closes its waves on mine and me,
In the shadowy aisles, by the marble white
I watch till dawn blooms out of night.
Not yours yon passive bride, De l'Orme,
 With pallid cheek and sealèd eye ;
You never loved her living form
 As I her snow-cold effigy.

ROSABELLE.

“THE night is blind with a double dark,
And rain and hail come down together—
'Tis well to sit by the fire and hark
To the stormy weather.

“The beggar lies down in the misty dell,
And the peasant faces the eddying storm;
But you that weep, fair Rosabelle,
Sit housed and warm.”

“Better be out on the barren hills
With the wild night blowing my sorrow blind,
Than listening here to my heart that thrills
Like a bell that's tolled by the passing wind.”

“You may wander all day with a page at your rein,
Greyhounds to follow, and hawks for your wrist,
East and west, through your lord's domain,
Whither you list.

“When you ride through the town in the even light,
Pacing your steed 'neath the elms tall and shady,
Each village girl all the summer night
Dreams she's a lady.”

“Would I were hearing the evening hymn
My mother sings to the babe on her knee,
Or floating by dawn o'er the waters dim
Roland, my brother, alone with thee!

My step is faint in your bannered halls,
Where the bright armour flashes, the windows high—
Slit through the rock of the massive walls—
Frame in a strip of the fair blue sky.

By the long lance windows, the deep arched door
Shadows stand fighting the golden light,

And the leap of a hound on the oaken floor
Rings like the tread of an armèd knight.

In the niches arched over pale figures of stone,
There are voices that mimic my bursting sighs;
And the jewels that tremble around my zone
Mock me with scorn in their flashing eyes.

My sleek greyhound and my merlin bold
Chafe at restraining; the steed I rein
Wantonly bears on the curb of gold—
Slighting my will with a high disdain.

How goes the night in the fisher's cot?
Is the boat safe moored? Does the hearth shine clear?
Are they jesting together while I, forgot,
Link every thought to a falling tear?

If Roland is out in his fisher's bark,
My mother sings low to the child on her knee,
My father stops mending his nets to mark
How the wind with the sea-birds is skimming the sea.

With my sad eyes and my rich attire,
Lifting the latch, should I enter there,
Old Raoul, the bloodhound, that dreams by the fire,
Would rouse him to threaten my pale despair.

Early in March, ere the spring winds blow,
Ere the hill-snows melt or the skies look bland,
On the lone white shore where the tide is low
They shall hollow my grave in the sloping sand.

A GRAY DAY IN APRIL.

O'ERFLOWED by April mists, the April sun
Stands like a spot of silver on the sky,
And my pale shadow gliding at my side,
Scarce paints the ground. A doubtful radiance dwells
Over broad fields and round back-rolling hills ;
The heaven is uniform gray, and from its edge
The bold firm pencilling of blue mountain tops
Is almost blurred away. The wind's long sigh,
Like the sea-Ariel's in his prison shell,
Stirs through the light-clad wood, and thither leads,
Edging the marsh, and loitering up the slope,
The footpath trodden through the grassy fields.

Spring flowers are up—the numb life that hath lain
Under the brown leaves like a chrysalis,
Is suddenly free. The long wood aisles are bright
With the anemone, that sylvan star
Hung in the dawn of Spring. The fern leaves still
Curl to their stalk, but in the open fields
The violet buds are blue. Later will come
The alder, hedging with its summer snow
Roadside and runlet; by the meadow marsh
High banks of reddening laurel. Last of all
The tall field flower that at the door of Autumn
Knocks with its golden wand.

All still—how still!

Along the hollows float slow waifs of sound,
Echoes of echoes! For the careless wind
Drops half his freight of melody, and brings
Of the bird's song a note, and leaves behind
The brook's full music, and imperfectly
Conveys the laughter and linked voices blown
This way across the fields, from noisy groups
Bound to their hill-side school.

My dog lies near,

Limbs crossed and head uplift—and steady eyes
Searching the gleamy distance.

It is good,
Good for the languid frame and restless spirit,
A day like this. Thought fades into a dream;
The jubilant music of creation's hymn,
Yearly renewed, sounds faint as if withdrawn
Into the skies, and the irregular pulses
Beat slow true time. Life, the wild wounded bird,
From circling sky-ward, earth-ward, sinks at last
Into the bloomy grass, so glad to rest
It scarcely feels the arrow in its side.

THE DEATH OF THE LILY.

“I SHALL lie no more where the winds bend low
The reeds that mock when the forests roar ;
Where the crowding waves with a measured flow
Come rippling up to the mossy shore.”
Woe for the lily! her sisters gone,
She bent to her mirror of crystal alone.

“I shall sleep no more when the bright wave comes
To woo my head to its heaving breast ;
And smile no more when the white swan plumes
His ruffled wing by my tossing crest.”
Woe for the lily! the winds came rude,
And her wan lips bowed to the mantling flood.

“I shall watch no more when by midnight’s ray
The wave-sprites garland their yellow hair ;
Nor see them leap through the frolic spray
To wreath my buds with the star-beam there.”
Woe for the lily ! her head drooped low,
And her sweet breath mixed with the water’s flow.

“I shall lift, oh never, my chalice of pearl
To the rosy lips of the morn again ;
To the blush of the day when her pinions furl,
To the silent dew or the gentle rain.”
Woe for the lily ! her reign was past,
And her white leaves whirled to the angry blast.

WINDS.

CAME on the winter twilight—homeward steps
Were hasty in the streets, the panes were blind
With sudden frost, and curtains closely dropt,
Shut out the bitter aspect of the storm,
But not its voice. 'Twas said, “Oh desolate wind!
What's like the wind for sadness?” Answered then
One who, reclining by the fireside, basked
With shaded eyelids in its ruddy light,
“'Tis never sad to me—I love the winds,
Free Arabs of the air, that have no home,
But pitch their cloudy tents upon the brink
Of Arctic azure, or through midnight skies

Fantastic with auroras, side by side,
With winged wild legions screaming sweep the poles,
Tuning their hoarse throats to the bruit of waves.
Were it my own to give or keep, at death,
I would bequeath my soul to such a wind."

Light-spoken words, dropped in the storm's full pause,
Forgotten ere its rise.

Commit thy soul
To the wild keeping of those vagrant winds?
Those melancholy winds that gird the earth
With sadness?

Not the summer winds that lie
Rocked bird-like in high branches, that fly fast
Down the moist morning shadows, that tread soft
Through the dim woods at even, that precede
The silver columns of the marching rain
Along the parched pale meadows. Summer winds
'Gainst whom no door is shut, that may come in,
Refresh the sleeper, or with angels bear
The soul from dead lips up into the blue
Deep calm above. Light winds that may tread close

Upon light footsteps, pluck the robe that shrines
A form beloved, lift the bright floating hair,
Touch brow and lip and cheek with love's full freedom,
Fearless and unproved.

But, oh, to fly
Bound to the flanks of such a desert steed,
Its wolf pack howling after ! Desolate nights,
To *be* the restless thing that moaning pleads
Under the windows, tampers with the locks,
Breathes hard along the door-sill, like a hound
That's shut out from his master, weeps, entreats,
Shrieks, curses. By the fireside or the board,
They would not know thy voice. Laughter and jests
And sweet songs, faintly would come out to thee
For answer. While the star-like tapers glanced
From stair to stair, then stationary, limned
Light flitting shapes upon the curtains drawn
In the familiar chambers, then went out
One by one, sudden, thou, lamenting still,
Wouldst linger near, but when the last bright point
Dropped into gloom, as one who crowds despair
Close, like a robe, to his complaining lips,

Into the churchyard stealing, thou wouldst seek
Thy new-heaped grave, now difficult to find
Under the thick white universal snow,
And humbly pray the dead shape lying there
For shelter in its heart and leave to drink
Of that mysterious cup so freely given
To brutes and the brute senses, but denied
To the bright lordly spirit.

SORROW VOICES.

I'LL wrap me in my sorrow's ample folds,
As in a winding-sheet; and, doomed to life,
I'll counterfeit the grave. Nor song of bird,
Nor touch of sunbeam, shall call up again
My forehead from the dust. Prone, lying thus,
I hear my dreary years come moaning in
Like cold, slow waves—let them break over me!
Here will I lie, as one in lethargy,
My dumb grief stretched beside me.

Peace! art thou

The first to suffer? Measure with great ills
Thy small adversities! Dispose thyself
To learn life's common and distasteful lesson.

To weigh my anguish with another's pain
Will make it none the lighter, and, distinct
'Tis shapen from the common mass of sorrow;
Nor can I lose it in a crowd of griefs.
Be sure that it is large enough to fill
My aching heart.

As mothers clasp their babes,
Thou hold'st it there. As mothers chide their offspring,
Thou dost complain of it, yet snatch it back,
If part withdrawn; and, when its fretful life
Is quite extinct, no doubt thou wilt enfold it
As mothers clasp dead infants to their bosoms.

How terrible must be the countenance
Of a dead grief!

Ay, grief untimely dead,
Slain in its prime, struck down by violent hands—
Say shame or scorn. Its desolate white shape,
Uncoffined, lies in some still separate chamber
That thought goes by, a-tiptoe, that's a bugbear
To the sweet infant, joy. Not so the grief
Led down the years and tended by the soft,

Sweet, unobtrusive charities of time.
But these are rare. Nine-tenths of all the woes
Petted to death, love-stinted of their growth,
Die pigmies. Is it precious to thy soul?
Make not a tender darling of thy sorrow,
But school it roughly in the ways of life,
Till from a vexing tyrant it shall grow
To be thy chiefest friend and counsellor.
Griefs rightly nurtured die not till they flower;
So keep thy trouble—we have leave to suffer.

Thy words are like the braying of the trumpets
To one who bleeds upon a battle field.
There is no heart in me for noble doing.
If the old fiery impulse prompt again,
'Tis but an impulse. Who so wise in sorrow
As they who pay lip service at her shrines?
Who, standing safe beside her awful gulfs,
Guess at their depths, and measure with cold glances
What souls have fathomed! Wouldst thou counsel me?
Let grief expound the meaning of those words
Thou sayest so well. Earth with her bars surrounds me,

Her weeds are wrapped about my head, and all
Her billows and her waves pass over me!
Take not in vain the sacred name of hope,
Nor plague my soul with any show of comfort.
Oh hope! oh joy! sweet words how blank to me!
Cold as the faces of estrangèd friends!
Familiar words, but foreign as are sounds
Of common life to one who weeps apart,
With death for company. Behold! behold!
A desert without cleft or cave to hide in
I cross alone; nor dare to look beyond,
Where looms the phantom of a shoreless sea;
And o'er its waste, sore wounded and pursued,
A bird that flutters on—but never finds
Refuge or rest.

How shall I comfort thee,
Possessed with anguish? Weep beside thee here?
Stretch to the measure of thy froward griefs
My gift of pity? Count my tears by thine?
Give sigh for sigh? Oh, magnify thy hurt!
Be vain of thy affliction! I distrust
The grief that knows so well its own proportions.

Great sorrows rule like Jove upon Olympus,
And though sometimes the lightnings issue thence,
And full-toned voices intimate his presence,
Be sure the god will never quit his cloud.
They come on missions, lifted cross in hand,
To preach us from our idols. They draw near
Our trancèd souls, and, weeping tears divine,
Call till they rise and stagger to the light,
Bound hand and foot with grave-clothes. Mighty trials
Are sent to mighty spirits that have sinew
To grapple with them. 'Oh! we dress our puppets
In the full robes of sorrow, and adore them;
We bring our foolish and unchastened hearts
Into Heaven's very presence; there count o'er
The baubles it has broken, and bewail them.
Mothers do pity in their weeping charges
The baby griefs they smile at. It is well
That we are children in the sight of God!

M A Y, 1853.

To one whose wine of life
Blushed under lilies, Death victorious spake,
Proving the temper of his keen-edged sword
On that light feather, hope.

“Thou infidel!

Knowing my touch in every flower that falls,
Yet by the tenor of thine unawed life
Ever denying me.

Once was it thus?

As one who dwells in valleys, yet looks up
From flowers and sun-barred paths to bid his thoughts
Light on the circling snow-peaks, thou didst lift
Early, thy soul to me. If now thou fearest,
Yet when the wasting of thy life began,
Strange pleasure mixed with awe.

As one who sings

Aloud to deafen sorrow, thou mayst drown
Awhile my solemn warning. Yet thine eyes
Read me in all things. All things offer thee
Only my gifts. To thee the sunshine brings
Fever and faintness. By fresh summer winds,
Grave damps are blown.

A little while, poor fool,
Life shall make sport of thee. There shall be times
When she will breathe new vigour through thy limbs,
Smile through thine eyes, lend to thy heavy step
Deceitful lightness. I, that stand so near,
Will seem afar. Spring hopes will bloom again
Like those November violets the gaunt frost
Takes in his shrivelled fingers. Then, some day,
While thou dost shudder and grow pale to cross
December's snowy threshold—some dull day
When winter, through the early April woods,
Gathering his tatters round him, stalks and scares
The blossoms back, thou'lt meet me face to face
Upon that narrow path, not wide enough
For me and thee."

TO ———.

SHADOWS had fluttered and nested

Under the boughs and the low-hanging eaves,
Soft fell the darkness around us,
The dew through the leaves.

As one who at twilight left lonely,

Lit by the stars and the slow-rising moon,
Touching the silver keys lightly,
Plays tune after tune;

Not knowing a spirit more gifted,

Still though it listen and far though it seems,
Is sending adrift on the music
Beautiful dreams;

So, in my twilight of sadness,
Careless I struck from the swift keys of thought,
Fancies, like snatches of music,
Idle, unsought.

Nor guessed that a note of my playing,
Passing the gates where thy song, angel bright,
Lay asleep like a princess enchanted,
Would guide it to light.

EARLY WALKS.

WHO talks of the pleasure of treading the fields,

When morning is fresh in the skies?

Be sure that he walked with poetical feet

And saw with poetical eyes.

Be sure that all people who rave

Of the beauty of day at its break,

Of the dawn that comes radiant in purple and gold

Are the last to arise for its sake.

'Tis charming to wake with the blush of the morn,

'Tis charming, so poets may sing,

To wander when day o'er the diamond-dropped earth

Just flutters her delicate wing;

I'll give you a piece of advice;
When the dawning is mantling the star,
You'll find that to quietly look from your couch,
Through a window, is better by far.

The breath of the morning brings shivers and chills,
The fields are bespattered with dew,
And the drop that's so bright in the violet's eye,
Can be vastly unpleasant to you.

And if you're a lady, alas!

Your drapery's much in the way,
And a terrible foe to the graces you'll find
In the beautiful herald of day.

I'll give you the proper receipt for a walk:—

Dont stir from your pillow till nine,
Then quietly take your hot coffee and rolls,
And give the sun leisure to shine.

When the dew is quite off of the grass,
And the woods are just pleasantly warm,
With a book in your hand, or a pencil, perhaps,
You'll own my receipt is a charm.

PUSH THE BOTTLE AROUND, TOM!

PUSH the bottle around, Tom,
Fill your goblet quite up to the brim,
And when Care in its nectar is drowned, Tom,
Sing a pæan for Time and for him!
Sing a pæan o'er Time as he dies, Tom,
Let's hurry him on with a glee,
For the faster the old fellow flies, Tom,
The better for you and for me.

'Tis a terrible thing to grow old, Tom,
'Tis a terrible thing to perceive
Old Time with his visage so cold, Tom,
Encroaching without asking leave.

And to see the sweet bloom on the lip, Tom,
And the pleasant light in the eye,
Take flight with the years as they slip, Tom,
So noiselessly, rapidly by.

There's a deepening line on your brow, Tom,
There's one at the side of your nose,
And a touch of the rebel snow, Tom,
Much thicker than you may suppose.
There's a graceless rotund in your back, Tom,
There's a wintriness, too, on your cheek,
And your voice has a kind of a crack, Tom,
Whether you sing or you speak.

'Tis a terrible thing to be slighted, Tom,
'Tis a terrible thing to know
That though you may still be invited, Tom,
You're no longer asked as a beau.
To be sentenced to talk with papa, Tom,
Though longing the while to take wing,
And to feel that the kindest mamma, Tom,
Considers you not just—"the thing."

I wish, now and then, I had married, Tom,
For mine is a lonely life,
But he who for time has tarried, Tom,
May whistle, *we* know, for a wife.
Oh ho! for the hours of youth, Tom,
The bloom of the earlier day,
Could we have it all over in truth, Tom,
We'd manage it some other way.

But push the bright bottle around, Tom,
And fill up your glass to the brim,
And when Care in its nectar is drowned, Tom,
A pæan for Time and for him!
Sing a pæan o'er Time as he dies, Tom,
Let's hurry him on with a glee,
For the faster the old fellow flies, Tom,
The better for you and for me!

A PORTRAIT.

HIS small arched neck looks fiery like a steed's,
His eyes are dark and glancing. Antelopes
Are limbed as lightly. Knee-deep in bright tan
He stands—bright tan across his sloping chest,
And o'er his throat, that's graceful as a lady's,
Save this all glossy blackness. Like most brutes
He proves his breeding by his fine positions ;
Now, stretched without my window, on the roof
That slopes into the sunshine, light limbs crossed
And muzzle laid athwart them ; now, distinct,
Painted against the sky, one slender foot
Lift, and bent inward ; now, upon my couch
He lies with crest erect, and tawny paws
Dropt o'er the cushion's edge.

SCENE FROM THE "STOCKHOLM, FONTAINE-
BLEAU, ET ROME," OF ALEX. DUMAS.

CHRISTINA, *Ex-Queen of Sweden.*

ENVOYS.

CHRISTINA.

Good-morrow, gentlemen !

You seek me—I guess wherefore. Sweden's queen
How gladly I would be again, God knows
Whose hand withholds me from the throne. Yon sceptre,
So fair to look upon, must grace my tomb.
You come too late.

AN ENVOY.

Madame, for the Powers Supreme
It never is too late. God's self, when kings,
Empires, and nations in the balance tremble,
Looks twice before he strikes; and sometimes, when
The death-hour's ready, beckons up the sun
From the horizon, and signs back the night.
His power can do as much for you.

ANOTHER.

Ah, Madame!
Heaven grant ere long we see you on that throne
Where faithful Sweden looks for you!

CHRISTINA.

Christina
Hath ever lived for Sweden's happiness.
But to us all there comes an hour that knows
No happiness save that beyond the tomb.

1ST ENVOY.

Ay, but upon your brow suffer, at least

This crown, that so, when Death prepares to strike
The woman, seeing on your front its circle,
He may confounded wing him back to Heaven,
To question if the polished dart he grasps
Were sharpened for the queen.

CHRISTINA.

There's need of courage
For that. Oh, heavy is the diadem
To dying brows! When drop the palsied head
And the relaxing hand, sceptres and crowns
Are weary weights to carry to the tomb;
And when seven times the voice of God shall echo
Along the sepulchres, and the scared dead
Make answer, kings shall be the palest of them!
And more than one, arising, shall express,
Forgetting crown and sceptre, leave them hid
In the remotest shadows of his prison.

SCENE FROM "LE MISANTHROPE"
OF MOLIERE.

PHILINTE.

ALCESTE.

PHILINTE.

What is't? What ails you?

ALCESTE.

Pray you, leave me.

PHILINTE.

Nay,

Tell me what new extravagance—

ALCESTE.

Go hence—

Go hide yourself!

PHILINTE.

But while I speak, at least,
Suspend your anger.

ALCESTE.

I? I will be angry,
And will not listen.

PHILINTE.

In so rude a humour
I am at loss to read you. Though we're friends,
I still am first—

ALCESTE.

What, I your friend? No longer
Count on't. Till now I have professed you friendship,
But having learned your worth, withdraw my love,
Wishing no place in a corrupted heart.

PHILINTE.

You hold me then so much to blame, Alceste?

ALCESTE.

Go, you should die of shame. So vile an action
Baffles excuse. All honourable souls
Should count themselves offended. What! o'erwhelm
A man with your caresses, testify
Esteem, and back with protestations, offers,
And oaths your warm embraces, and when I
Would question you, you scarce recall his name,
Let fall your full-blown love in parting from him,
And bare to me your real indifference!
Death! 'tis unworthy, base, and infamous
Thus to betray the honour of your soul.
And if, by ill hap, I had done as much,
I'd hang myself for grief.

PHILINTE.

I do not find
Myself fair cause for hanging, and I pray you,
Forgive me if I soften your decision,
Nor for this matter hang myself at all.

ALCESTE.

A poor jest.

PHILINTE.

Nay, then, jesting put aside,
What would you have?

ALCESTE.

Each spokesman of his heart.

PHILINTE.

But when a man embraces you for joy,
Must you not do the like? Make to his zeal
Fitting reply, and offer pay by offer,
And oath by oath?

ALCESTE.

I cannot tolerate
The ways affected by your vain-tongued courtiers.
There's nothing that's so hateful to my soul
As the grimaces of these false protesters,
Bestowers of frivolous embraces, sayers
Of useless words, whose dull civilities
Tilt with the world, and know not to discern
The true man from the coxcomb. Where's the honour

If he that now caresses you, that swears
Friendship, good faith, zeal, tenderness, esteem,
That lifts heaven-high your praises, turns to give
As much to any rogue? There is no soul
Not wholly base, that does not scorn esteem
Thus prostitute. The richest banquet grows
A common feast, if all the world be there.
Esteem is built on preference. Who esteems
All esteems none. Since you approve and practise
These vices of the time, you shall no more
Walk in my fellowship, and I decline
The courtesy of him who cannot reckon
The shades of merit. I would be preferred,
And, to speak plain, the friend of all mankind
Is not a friend for me.

PHILINTE.

Being of the world,
We pay the world that tribute which is due.

ALCESTE.

I say it should be chastised without mercy,

This shameful trade of seeming friendships. Would
That men were men, and that at every season
Our words were still the plummets of our hearts,
No matter who should speak, and that our thoughts
Had put aside their masks of painted flatteries !

PHILINTE.

There are occasions when sincerity
Would be ridiculous, nay, barely suffered,
And, sometimes, no offence to your quick honour,
'Tis well to hide the heart. Would it be fit
Or civil, think you, to a thousand people,
To say one's thoughts of them ? To him I hate
Or who displeases me, shall I declare
The truth as it is ?

ALCESTE.

Yes.

PHILINTE.

What, to Emily
Say it is unbecoming at her age

To play the belle, and that her false complexion
Is shocking to her neighbours?

ALCESTE.

Certainly.

PHILINTE.

To Dorilas that he is tiresome,
And that he wearies every ear at court
Telling of his valour and ancestral glories?

ALCESTE.

'Tis well.

PHILINTE.

You jest!

ALCESTE.

I do not jest. Henceforth
Will I spare none. Mine eyes too deep are wounded.
Both court and city feed my growing spleen.
Grief occupies my soul and deep disgust,
When I behold the untruthful ways of men.
Flattery, injustice, treachery, and deceit
Are universal. Out! I'm weary of it;

Patience forsakes me, and my mettled anger
Would fight mankind!

PHILINTE.

Nay, in good sooth, I pray you
Put by these whims. You cannot mend the world.
And, since you love the truth, I'll tell you plainly
This folly draws great ridicule upon you;
This battling 'gainst the fashions of the times
Makes you the common laughing-stock.

ALCESTE.

By Heaven,
So much the better! Still, so much the better!
'Tis all I ask! My heart rejoices at it.
'Tis a good sign. So hateful is mankind,
That I should weep were men to count me wise.

PHILINTE.

Yours is a bitter grudge 'gainst human nature!

ALCESTE.

I have conceived for it an utter hatred.

PHILINTE.

And all poor mortals, every one, included ?
Not one beneath the sky—

ALCESTE.

I tell you, no—

'Tis universal, and I hate all men.
These for ill doing, those for falsely winking
On evil-doers, not regarding vice
With the deep hate of virtuous souls. Thou seest
The full extent of this mean complaisance
Shown for the arrant knave at law with me.
Who does not know the traitor through his mask ?
Who knows him not for what he is ? His eyes
Devoutly rolling, and his sleekened voice,
Impose on strangers to his name and ways.
'Tis known this scoundrel by the basest means
Has pushed his fortunes, and their bright success
Makes worth complain and virtue blush. Howe'er
You pelt him with foul words, no man disputes.
Call him cheat, villain, rascal, all agree,
Yet all do welcome, smile on him ; no door

Shuts out his baseness. Nay, if men contend
For any dignity, he triumphs ever
Over the worthiest. I'm sore at heart
To see vice honoured thus, and there are times
When sudden promptings of my inmost soul
Would counsel me to put the desert's breadth
Betwixt mankind and me.

PHILINTE.

Oh, in God's name,
Let not the times' offences sink so deep,
But judge humanity and scan its errors
With milder zeal. The virtue of this world
Must be discreet, and we may err by pushing
Goodness too far. Wisdom avoids extremes;
Bids us be virtuous with sobriety.
Your code of sterner days would be a yoke
Too heavy for the morals of the age,
And asks too much of human imperfection.
Bend to the times, and hold no folly greater
Than that of wishing to reform the world.
Like you, I see a hundred things a day

That call for mending, but whate'er they be,
Like you I am not angry, rather willing
To take men as they are. To soft forbearance
I school my soul, and hold, in court and city,
My phlegm as philosophic as your bile.

ALCESTE.

Ay, but this phlegm, so good at argument,
Can nothing ruffle? If, perchance, a friend
Betray you; if a skilful net entrap
Your gold, or if some busy-body scatter
For you, the quick seed of prolific slander,—
Will it not move you?

PHILINTE.

I do count these evils
You fret against, as vices that are part
Of human nature. It no more offends me
To see a man unjust, deceitful, selfish,
Than to behold vultures that scent the battle,
Malicious apes, or wolves that howl for rage.

Heaven's wonders ; pride is worthy of a crown,
Cunning is wit, stupidity's pure goodness,
The babbler's pleasant company, the silent
Mute from becoming modesty—'tis thus
A lover, in his ardour's blind excess,
Adores the very faults of her he loves.

THE END.

